

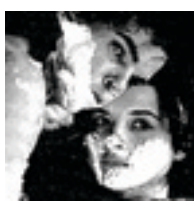
The hills of Hebei are still alive with the swish of skis and the hum of chair lifts.

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The 41 films made between 1895 and 2003 represent the cream of French cinema.

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Zi Yan began to look for her dream courtyard in 2003, just as the SARS epidemic hit Beijing.

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'No one was informed about the dairy farm contract when 90 percent of the villagers signed the contract surrendering their land for five years in 2000. The village committee made a secret deal. No meeting was held, and no representative villagers were ever told about it.'



Farm Land Furore

Farmers in a Shunyi village find their land has been leased until 2020, without their knowledge

By Chu Meng / Pan Hao

Gao Jianguo of Yaopo, a village in Shunyi District, was looking forward to having his 0.3 hectares of farmland back on March 31. In 2000, Gao and most of his fellow villagers signed contracts with the village committee surrendering their land for a period of five years. However Gao and the other's land, more than 13 hectares in total, has reportedly been contracted to a dairy farm until 2020.

Hengye Dairy Farm also signed a contract with the village committee to lease the land until 2000.

Rocky road to self-government

Exactly how over 13 hectares of farmland came to be signed over to the dairy farm for 20 years by village committee is shrouded in mystery. What is clear is that the contracts the Yaopo village committee signed with villagers conflict with the one the committee signed with the dairy farm. Gao Jianguo told *Beijing Today*, "I've seen the contract between the village committee and the dairy farm, it says it will remain valid from 2000 to 2020." Gao also said that the average value for such farmland at the time the contract was signed was no less than 1,000 yuan for 0.06 hectares. However, the dairy farm paid less than half that amount. Chen Jianmin, the vice director of Yaopo village, told *Beijing Today* Wednesday that the current value of that kind of farmland was around 1000 yuan per 0.06 hectares.

"No one was informed about the dairy farm contract when 90 percent of the villagers signed the contract surrendering their land for five years in 2000. The village committee made a secret deal. No meeting was held, and no representative villagers were ever told about it," Bai Shide, one of the representative villagers complained when *Beijing Today* asked why no villagers had opposed village committee leasing their land to the dairy farm.

He elaborated that in fact, all matters that closely relate to villagers' interests, whether big or small, should first be announced publicly by the committee, and any solution should be discussed

by all the villagers or their representatives. "The leaders always put their own interests ahead of village affairs. They demand that we abide by their decisions, and chose representatives through illegal or secret processes."

Qiao Xinsheng, a professor from Zhongnan University of Economics and Law's Law School explained to *Beijing Today* Tuesday, "This issue focuses on villager self-government and direct election of village committee leaders, which is a widely-existing phenomenon in grass root level in China's vast rural regions. Currently in rural China, due to various factors, villager self-government is at a preliminary stage. Power within villages is being dispersed, but self-government is still slowly emerging. So the urgent task for the central government now is to push village direct elections and further promote self-government."

He also stressed that it was vital to educate villagers about how to practice democratic elections. In fact villagers are often ignored in the training before the election. Some local officials even actively prevent villagers from knowing the relevant laws or the course of villager self-government. However, it is the villagers, not village leaders, who are essential to the elections. "We should do much more now to improve villagers' consciousness and ability to conduct elections. To help them to establish villagers' legal and controlling status in villager self-government is the key task of all levels of government departments. Moreover, Village Assemblies and Villager Representative Assemblies should be held regularly and consistently. Publicizing village affairs and making them open to all concerned should also be institutionalized."

Zero-tax policy eases farmers' burden

"Many young villagers who had left home to work in the city planned to return to resume farming after the abolition of the agricultural tax was announced. After all, farmers were born on their own land, which they cannot leave," Gao Jianguo told *Beijing Today*. "In the past, after paying

off all items of taxes and fees, we could earn only 300 to 400 yuan annually for 0.06 hectares of land. At the same time, township enterprises were booming, offering monthly salaries of 600 to 700 yuan. Obviously, it was much more tempting than planting crops. However, the situation has totally changed since the lifting of all taxes and fees."

Since March 2004 the agriculture sector in China entered a new era of zero tax with 26 of the mainland's 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions scrapping all agricultural taxes. As a result, millions of farmers have been released from their centuries-old tax burden in the world's most populous nation. Moreover, Premier Wen Jiabao announced at the same time that China planned to scrap all farming taxes within five years or less.

According to Xinhua, with the exception of the Tibet Autonomous Region, where no farming or stock breeding taxes have ever

'Once a company chooses a site, the owner of the farmland is entitled to receive a reasonable amount of compensation, and regardless of the amount, it has to be paid to the legal owner of the land, which is us, the farmers.'

In addition, nearly 600 million farmers have also benefited from direct subsidies from local governments totaling 11.6 billion yuan, while the central government last year allocated 34.2 percent of treasury bond proceeds, 37.6 billion yuan (\$4.5 billion), for agricultural products, mainly in grain production regions.

Land rights problems

The Land Contract Law, passed in August 2002, was designed to ensure that the right of farmers to use land under contract will not be changed for 30 years. However, there still are

been imposed, agriculture tax-free policies for farmers were introduced in the two northeastern agricultural provinces Heilongjiang and Jilin in 2004. A further 23 provinces and municipalities did the same this year around the time of Spring Festival. By the end of 2004, the Finance Ministry said the taxes and fees on farmers had been slashed by about 28 billion yuan (\$3.38 billion), a 30-percent reduction in 2003.

many hidden problems like the one farmers in Yaopo village have encountered. During the process of contracting, re-contracting or re-purposing farmland, corruption in village leadership has become an increasingly serious problem, and begun to impair farmers' interests. Some local authorities arbitrarily shortened the term of contracts and frequently changed the ownership of land use rights with administrative decrees.

However, the zero-tax policy and direct subsidies leave some of village leaders opportunities to handle bulk amount of money.

While the re-contracting and re-purposing of land has gone smoothly in most areas, the transition has sometimes created opportunities for corruption. In Sanli village in Southeast China's Zhejiang Province, tens of millions yuan of direct subsidies for grain farmers was pocketed by village committee leaders. They used the money to pay themselves salaries of over 20 thousand yuan per month, and held a village assembly meeting at the five-star West Lake State Guest Hotel in Hangzhou. The bill for the five day meeting came to 44,000 yuan for 19 people. The case has been widely reported in domestic media this week.

Sanli village was an example of urbanization gone wrong. Most of the land in the village which had previously been used for farming, had been taken over by factories and concrete buildings. As a way of encouraging development, the central government granted direct subsidies for farmers whose land had been re-purposed in this way.

Qiao Xinsheng described the case of Yaopo village in terms of contract law, "In fact, the Land Contract Law stipulates that ownership of the rights of land use cannot be changed before the expiration of the contract. Within the valid term of contracts, the contractors cannot take back their land and that the farmers can legally transfer, re-contract, put into share-holding ventures and exchange the rights of land use."

Not just about farming

Gao Jianguo commented that

there was more to the case than the zero-tax policy and subsidies for farmers. He said that as Shunyi District undergoing a process of urbanization, there is the possibility that some of the new constructions and expansions will be located on village farmland. For example, Beijing Hyundai's plant established three years ago just 2.5 kilometers north of Yaopo village and 5 kilometers east of Beijing Capital Airport. "Once a company chooses a site, the owner of the farmland is entitled to receive a reasonable amount of compensation, and regardless of the amount, it has to be paid to the legal owner of the land, which is us, the farmers," said Gao Jianguo.

Chen Zhanmin shares the same view on this issue, "It is quite possible that many factories and enterprises in the area will be expanded, which will result in huge amount of income for Yaopo village. Frankly, I do not think all the villagers are interested in farming, the output of the farm land has never been particularly high," he said. Whether one describes it as a wise investment or speculation, if such predictions prove accurate, there will be considerable financial benefit.

Chen cited two possible ways of solving the conflict that has arisen in Yaopo. "We will convince the villagers to transfer their farmland to us again this year, after all not all of the villagers want these lands. Also, we might negotiate with Hengye Dairy farm and see what we can do, though there is no guarantee a solution will be found."

The question of how the village committee came to sign two conflicting contracts in the first place remains unanswered. Gao Jianguo and many other villagers, 55 in total, have jointly signed a letter of appeal, which has been sent to the local township authorities, Shunyi District government and Beijing Municipality, however no responses have been received as yet.

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Beijing Seeks Proposals for Olympic Ceremonies

By Qiu Jiaoning

A global search has been launched for ideas for the opening and closing ceremonies of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. Jiang Xiaoyu, executive vice-president of BOCOG, the Games' organizing committee, said at a press conference Tuesday, "We are looking for proposals that could turn the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2008 Games into wonders, or ones that contain inspirations or indications for the final schemes. The ceremonies proposed should help to spread the Olympic Spirit, create a jubilant atmosphere for the Games and a homecoming feeling for all the participants of the

Olympic Games."

The proposals should visualize the concepts of Green Olympics, High-Tech Olympics and People's Olympics, and interpret the rich connotations of "harmony" and "peace" that the idea of People's Olympics tries to convey to the whole world. "Any interested individual or institution that wants to make a contribution is welcome, but non-Chinese nationals or organizations are required to form partnerships with Chinese citizens or organizations to participate," Jiang said. According to the announcement, candidates may download the request form for proposals and other related documents from the official website of

BOCOG (www.beijing2008.com) and are required to sign the legal documents for transfer of intellectual property rights and confidentiality agreements. Proposals will be accepted until July 31. BOCOG will submit its plans for the ceremonies next year to the International Olympic Committee for approval, and the final versions will be decided no later than May 2007. The opening and closing ceremonies are the most eye-catching parts of any Olympic Games and are seen as one of the criteria for a successful Olympic Games. The opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games is scheduled for August 8, 2008 and the closing ceremony for August 24.

Green GDP to Calculate Environmental Factors

By Qiu Jiaoning

The State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) and the National Bureau of Statistics have jointly launched a trial of a "green" GDP calculation system. The system takes environmental factors into account when calculating GDP, so as to put China's booming economy in line with sustainable development and check environmental degradation, according to a statement by SEPA vice director Pan Yue Monday. The one-year trial will be carried out in ten municipalities and provinces, namely Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Liaoning, Zhejiang, Anhui, Guangdong, Hainan, Chongqing, and Sichuan.

"The Green GDP calculation system should combine accounting of the economy and environmental costs, that is to say, it will deduct environmental costs from the traditional gross domestic product," Pan said. He said that the trial would set up regional environmental calculation frameworks to match the varied conditions in diverse areas and find scientific ways to assess losses caused by pollution and major environmental incidents. The trial comprises four phases - investigation, technical preparation, overall calculation and assessment, all of which will be concluded by the end of February next year. "It is a long and arduous procedure to set up a green GDP calculation system, but we will firmly push it ahead, no matter what difficulties lie ahead," Pan said. It is expected that environmental factors will be included in assessment criteria for officials' political records by the end of 2007, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported Tuesday.

New Management Rules for Foreign Experts

By Annie Wei

New rules on the employment of foreign employees are to be issued according to an article published on the website of the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs Monday. The new regulations, which are still awaiting official approval, are expected to be released within the year. Director of the administration Wan Xueyuan was quoted in the article as saying that the new regulations are an important step for China to introduce foreign experts systematically and legitimately. Wan said that China would hire more foreign experts in the agriculture sector to push forward the industrialization of agricultural products. A spokesman from the administration's Information Office told *Beijing Today* Wednesday that qualified experts with particular backgrounds were needed in China. These include foreign employees in the areas of bio-environment, economic development, city planning and development, and public sanitation.



Top Advisory Body Meets For Annual Session

China's top advisory body, the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), convened its annual full session at the Great Hall of the People yesterday afternoon. A total of 2,186 advisors from all over the country are participating in the meeting, which is scheduled to end March 12. The annual full session of the National People's Congress (NPC) will begin tomorrow.

Xinhua Photo

White Paper Published on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities

A white paper published on Monday says the country's regional autonomy system for ethnic minorities adopted half a century ago has been in conformity with the country's "peculiar situation" and proven to be in the common interests of all ethnic groups. *Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities in China*, issued by the Information Office of the State Council, says he system "is critical to enhancing the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among different ethnic groups, to upholding national unification, and to accelerating the development of

places where regional autonomy is practiced." By the end of 2003, China had established 155 ethnic autonomous areas, which cover 64 percent of the country's entire territory. "Before the founding of New China, the ethnic minority areas suffered from low productivity, and underdeveloped economy, society and culture," the white paper says. Most of the population of these areas were illiterate, and suffered epidemics of such contagious diseases as plague, smallpox and malaria. As a result of over half a century's

efforts, living conditions and the environment in ethnic autonomous areas have conspicuously improved. People now "share the achievements of development brought about by the modernization construction of the country," the document says. In 2003, the GDP of China's ethnic autonomous areas reached almost 1.04 trillion yuan (US \$125 billion), exceeding 1 trillion yuan for the first time. The per-capita net income of rural residents in ethnic autonomous areas was 1,895 yuan, 2.31 times that in 1994. (Xinhua)

Foreign Trade Barrier Investigation Rules Implemented

By Annie Wei

The Ministry of Commerce announced Monday that new foreign trade barrier investigation rules have been put into effect. More and more Chinese products have faced foreign trade barriers in recent years, prompting the issuing of provisional rules on foreign trade barrier investigations at the end of 2002. Wang Shichun, director of the Ministry of Commerce's Bureau of Fair

Trade for Import and Export was quoted on the ministry's website as saying that the new version maintains the structure and body of the provisional rules, while extending the definition of trade barriers. Trade barriers are defined more specifically on the basis of drawing on other countries' experiences. It has also adjusted the application for trade barriers investigation. The revision has improved the com-

pliance of the regime with multinational rules, including those of the WTO, and offers more effective protection to petitioners, Wang said. Li Chenggang, vice-director of the bureau commented that the new version covers both export and import trade barriers. Meanwhile information on foreign trade barriers will be collected, enabling China to take appropriate counter measures when necessary.

PBC to Introduce Forex Market Maker System

By Wang Shuang

A report issued by the People's Bank of China (PBC) last Thursday indicates that the US dollar market maker system could be introduced as a means of further deepening reform of the foreign exchange management system and promote equilibrium of the balance of payments. The China Monetary Policy Executive Report Quarter 4, 2004 says the PBC will speed up infrastructure construction of the foreign exchange market, increase varieties of transactions in the inter-bank foreign exchange market and experiment with the US dollar market maker system. According to Zhu Yingzi, associate professor from Tsinghua University's School of Economics and Management, the market maker system is widely used in foreign exchange, stock and bond markets in western coun-

tries. In the foreign exchange market, the market makers are usually commercial banks with large current assets. The other participants in the market would ask for a exchange rate quotes, then decide where to buy or sell their foreign currency holdings. Thus, a market price will be formed and the exchange rate will go up and down with this price. At present, China's foreign exchange market has only one market maker, the PBC. So there is no "market" price and the RMB exchange rate closely follows the exchange rate of the US dollar. Hence China's economy in this regard is passive. By introducing the market maker system, the government could cultivate several market makers and force the market to form a market price step by step. With the market price becoming more and more sensitive, the RMB exchange rate would become more

and more flexible. The other significance of introducing this rule lies in reducing the foreign exchange reserve. Many analysts consider China's the foreign exchange reserve to have already exceeded the reasonable range. With the normalization of the exchange rate, the reserve would be adjusted to within a reasonable range. As to the appreciation pressure on the RMB, Zhu said adoption of the system could be regarded as a response to that, and that there was a strong possibility the RMB exchange rate would go up. Zhu predicted that among the pilot banks, the Bank of China was likely to have a seat, but stressed that no matter how many banks were included in the foreign exchange market, the PBC would always be in the market and remain the biggest seller and buyer.

Beijing to Host Fortune Global Forum

By Deng Minjie

The Fortune Global Forum 2005 will be held in Beijing from May 16 to 18, according to a joint press release by the State Council Information Office, the Beijing government and US-based *Fortune* Magazine Tuesday. Themed China and the New Asian Century, the forum will mainly focus on influential sectors of China's economic growth, such as the wireless and automotive industries. Some analysts have described the forum as an important platform not only for the world to learn about China, but also for providing an opportunity for foreign firms to extend their business here. Business leaders from leading multinationals such as General Motors, Daimler Chrysler, BMW and SCIO are being invited to attend the forum, and organizers expect over 300 oversea companies and 200 Chinese business delegates to participate. Government officials and some noted scholars will also attend the forum to participate in discussions on prominent issues. A spokesman for State Council Information Office said President Hu Jintao will deliver a keynote address at the opening ceremony on May 16.

Beijing Promotes Tourism in Europe

By Annie Wei

The Beijing Tourism Bureau has been holding promotions in Milan and London since February 12. With the Beijing Olympics drawing closer, the bureau is seeking to attract more tourists by combining Beijing's image with the Olympic Games. Yu Changjiang, director of the bureau, detailed the plan for promoting tourism to Beijing in *China News* last Sunday. Activities include launching a quiz on the 2008 Beijing Olympics in some mainstream media, and organizing a photography campaign among foreign tourists. Wang Qing, director of the bureau's promotion and marketing department told *Beijing Today* Wednesday that a commercial film introducing Beijing would be broadcast on CNN and certain European TV channels before June 2005. The estimated number of foreign tourists visiting Beijing annually will reach 3.4 million and the number of domestic tourists will reach 140 million by the end of 2005, with revenue amounting to 28 billion yuan (\$3.4 billion), Wang said.

Regulations Tighten Automobile Market

By Annie Wei

New regulations governing automobile sales were issued last Friday, and will take effect from April 1. The regulations, jointly released by the Ministry of Commerce, the State Development Planning Commission and the State Administration for Industry and Commerce are intended to bring uniformity to sales channels, promote the development of the automobile market and protect the rights and interests of consumers. To enter the automobile sales market, any individual or company must be authorized by the automobile producer or franchisee, the regulations state. They also list specific requirements for automobile distributors, such as the size of the showroom and verification of completed sales service, and detail supervision management requirements for automobile suppliers and distributors. According to the regulations, foreign automobile producers should authorize at least one domestic company as its franchisee in China before entering the domestic market. Prior to December 11, 2006, any foreign investor in a company with over 30 showrooms in China should hold no more than a 49 percent share. They also require a maximal 150 kilometers between car distributor and related parts suppliers and service centers. The regulations also state that non-authorized distributors should apply for authorization before October 1.

New Pawn-Broking Rules Released

By Annie Wei

The Ministry of Commerce released new regulations on pawn-broking management last Friday, according to an announcement on its official website. The rules will take effect as of April 1. The new regulations feature significant revisions and adjustments, such as increasing the minimum registered capital requirement for opening pawnshops dealing with real estate mortgage. It also enhances authorities' supervision of financial risk in the pawn-broking industry. The regulations also clarify the duties of different government bodies, which will shorten the application periods for opening pawnshops and simplify related application procedures. Guo Jinshan, general manager of Huaxia Pawn Co and chairman of the Beijing Pawn-Broking Industry Association told *Beijing Today* Wednesday that pawnshops in China used to play an important role in financial services. Due to the simple procedures and the fact that there were no requirements for credit survey or guarantors, more and more people opt to go to a pawnshop rather than a bank for personal loans. The regulations will benefit the development of the pawn-broking industry, Guo said, but further revision and improvement will be needed as the industry grows.

First Domestic Private Railway Going Full Steam Ahead

By Annie Wei

An ambitious deal to create China's first privately-invested railway is going forward in Zhejiang Province, a source from a company that has put money into the line said.

Jiang Zhiyuan, vice-general manager of Changshan Concrete Co. from Changshan County, Zhejiang told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday that the plan to build the private Quzhou-Changshan railway, a 45-kilometer private line that would run between Changshan and Quzhou in Zhejiang, was nearing completion.

Changshan Concrete Co. will hold a 32.5 stake in the line, as will the Changshan County government, while the National Ministry of Railways will control a majority 35 percent share.

"Profits will be divided among all the shareholders," Jiang said.

The Ministry of Land and Resources has already approved the Quzhou-Changshan railway, construction of which is expected to start next quarter and operation slated to begin next year, *China Business* reported on Monday.

Transportation had become a bottleneck for local development in

Changshan, especially for the lucrative local limestone mining industry, Xie Chang, vice director of the finance bureau of Changshan County was quoted as saying.

Jiang told the newspaper that his company had signed an agreement with the Changshan government to set up a 2.2 billion yuan concrete factory in the area with the precondition that the government would help get approval for building a new railway.

Building the railway in cooperation with the rail ministry was a more practical option than fully owning it, Jiang was quoted as saying.

He added that the railway would be up and running soon, so his company was not concerned about profitability because it could earn high profits from shipping the products of its new concrete factory.

Huang Min, director of the planning department of the Ministry of Railway was quoted by *China Business* as saying the Quzhou-Changshan line was a herald of more investment flowing into China's rail network, adding the ministry was holding talks with other potential investors.

China's First Private Airline Set to Take Off



The crew members receive bouquet after the Boeing 737-900 airplane of Okay Airways arrived in Tianjin 25 February 2005. Photo by Jiang Baocheng

By Xu Chuanmei

Okay Airways, China's first privately-owned airline, is scheduled to make its maiden flight on Saturday morning.

The airline, which has 300 million yuan (\$36.2 million) in registered capital, has made Binhai International Airport in Tianjin its hub and will initially service routes to Kunming, Changsha, Zhangjiajie, Guilin, Hohhot, Taiyuan and Harbin.

Okay Airways will mainly operate air cargo, express service and passenger charter flights and ground distribution services. The airline's fleet is made up of Boeing 737-900 aircraft, which seat up to 189 passengers and offer the lowest seat-per-mile costs of any single-aisle airplane.

The company took delivery of its first 737-900, subleased from Korean Airlines, last Friday and

planned to begin passenger service on March 5, an Okay Airlines executive told Xinhua. As of Wednesday, however, ticket sales for Okay flights had not begun, a clerk at the ticket office of Binhai International Airport said to *Beijing Today*.

Okay Airlines is one of four private airlines, all of which are expected to operate as low-cost carriers, approved by the Chinese government last year.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China recently completed a draft version of new rules allowing private capital in the previously tightly controlled air sector, aiming to help widen investment channels and remove monopoly practices, an administration spokesman said.

Analysts say the liberalization drive is being fueled by rapidly growing demand for airline services in this country.

Exxon Mobil Confirms Sale of Sinopec Stake

Exxon Mobil Corp confirmed Wednesday that it had completed the sale of its 3.7 percent stake in China's largest refining company, saying it had met the goals it set in participating in the IPO four years ago.

The biggest US integrated oil company said the sale of its 3.17 billion shares in China Petroleum & Chemical Corp, known as Sinopec, at a price of HK\$3.38 (US\$0.43) a share started after the close of the Hong Kong market and brought in about HK\$10.7 billion, or US\$1.37 billion.

The gain from the sale would be reported as part of Exxon

Mobil's first-quarter earnings, the company said. Compared with the price Exxon Mobil paid for the shares in the October 2000 IPO - HK\$1.61 a share - the oil giant more than doubled its investment.

"Our primary objective was to demonstrate our commitment to China and to support Sinopec's IPO," said Lauren Kerr, a spokeswoman for Exxon Mobil. "We feel that both of those objectives have been successfully met."

Two other global oil producers who invested in Sinopec's IPO, BP PLC and Royal Dutch/Shell Group, sold their stakes early last year for roughly US\$730



Photo by A Fu

million each.

Exxon Mobil's sale was by no means a pullout from China, said Jacques Rousseau, who covers the company for Friedman Billings Ramsey. "It's just that they don't need to own the (Sinopec) company stock," he said.

There was much more interest among the major oil producers in owning a stake in foreign companies that can provide access to coveted oil and natural gas resources, as in Russia, he added. (Xinhua)

Shanda Purchase of Sina Hits Deadlock

By Wang Shuang

A surprise move by online gaming firm Shanda to pull off a share purchase of prominent domestic Internet portal Sina has been a topic of heated debate around China since it came to light two weeks ago, and the outcome remains unclear because both sides appear to be in a deadlock. Neither Shanda nor Sina has made a formal statement or taken further action on the matter since February 18.

Experts interviewed in a CCTV-2 program on the issue run on Monday gave three predictions for possible results to the proposed take-over.

The first would be a merger between Shanda and Sina into one company. That was what Shanda was hoping for, the experts speculated. But the stock price for such a merger could be a problem, as Sina might demand a price unacceptable to Shanda, they said.

Another possibility was the two companies would remain separate for the time being as they worked out a long-term cooperation deal. "The transaction could go through in three to six months or drag on for two to three years," Xie Wen, CEO of Homeway Information and Technology said on the program.

Or a third party could get involved in the purchase. Rumors are swirling that American portal Yahoo and a domestic communications giant were interested in buying Sina. But top management at Yahoo denied those rumors on Monday.

Since the purchase attempt came to light, Sina stock has risen sharply. By Wednesday morning, it reached \$30.50 per share, an increase of 6.9 percent.

TOM Online Buys Indian Game Firm

By Annie Wei

Leading Chinese Internet firm TOM Online announced the completion of its purchase of Indian gaming company Indiagames last Thursday.

TOM Online, a subsidiary of TOM Group, paid \$177 million in share capital for an 80 percent stake in Indiagames, which was founded in 1999 and quickly became a major player in the mobile games publishing business.

The acquisition made Indiagames a non-wholly-owned subsidiary of TOM Online, Tan Xiaoqing from the corporate communications department at TOM Online told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

The move was scheduled to be completed on or before February 28, but extra time was needed to complete the process of subscription, issue and allotment of shares in India, TOM Online announced, adding the two parties had agreed completion would be delayed to no later than March 31.

"The mobile gaming industry has huge potential and Indiagames is already turning profits," Feng Jue, vice chairman of TOM Online was quoted as saying by *China Business Daily* on Monday.

Feng added 30 percent of Indiagames' profits came from the India market and 70 percent from overseas.

The founder of Indiagames, Vishal Gondal, and his team had signed agreements with TOM Online to continue working at the company after its acquisition, Feng said.

Tongrentang Buys Famed Baozi Brand

By Xu Chuanmei

Tianjin Tongrentang won the bidding at a public auction on Monday to purchase the state-owned assets of Tianjin Goubuli Catering (Group) Corp. for 106 million yuan. The buy gave Tongrentang, one of China's leading producers of traditional Chinese medicine, an 80 percent stake in Goubuli.

Established in 1858, Goubuli has long enjoyed nationwide fame for its *baozi*, or pork-filled steamed buns. The company became a primarily state-owned firm in the 1950s.

Goubuli's assets are worth a total of 117 million yuan, though it also has over 80 million yuan in debts. Based on the firm's net assets of almost 37 million yuan, the base price at Monday's auction was set at 15.2 million yuan.

Tianjin Tongrentang is another long-running domestic brand that has been in business for 150 years. It became a shareholding company in 2002, with the state assuming a 40 percent stake. Other shareholders include Tianjin Traditional Chinese Medicine Group Corp, Tianjin Television Station, Tianjin Xiqing Development Corp and two individuals.

Goubuli Chairman Zhao Jiexiang said his company was in fine financial shape, earning 75 million yuan in sales revenues last year, the best performance since Tianjin Goubuli Catering Group was established in 1992, *China Business Times* reported.

But a source from Tongrentang told *Beijing Today* that financial data suggested Goubuli had been running in the red.

The five other companies that participated in the auction, including Zhejiang Tongfang Investment Shareholding Co., were all private enterprises. Zhu Zhiping, chairman of the board of Tongfang complained it was not fair to have to compete with Tongrentang because the state held such a large stake in the company, *China Youth Daily* reported.

IBM Sets Growth Plan for 2005

By Deng Minjie

US-based computing giant IBM released its 2005 plan for the China market on Monday in Beijing.

Henry Chow, chairman and CEO of IBM Greater China Group said IBM (China) had three main strategies this year: maintaining rapid growth, enhancing services and solutions and helping Chinese customers improve their productivity and competitiveness via innovation.

"Our goal is to grow faster than the market average, meaning if the market grows 10 percent, we have to do better than that. Generally speaking, our growth rate surpassed the market rate by over 50 percent last year," Chow said.

The company planned to cooperate with Chinese medical information firms, work with government informa-



Henry Chow, chairman and CEO of IBM Greater China

tion technology and management departments and share its considerable experience in cultivating corporate culture with developing Chinese enterprises, he added.

Regarding Lenovo's deal to purchase IBM's personal computing operations, Chow said, "We got approval from related administrations in the US before we entered co-operation with Lenovo, but we cannot give further comments before the US government's pending official investigation report comes out. I can say that our cooperation is going smoothly."

President of Wal-mart China Steps Down

By James Liu

Zhang Jiasheng, president of Wal-mart China, resigned from the position on March 1 according to a news release from the company's headquarter in Shenzhen.

Analysts in the retail industry speculated Zhang resigned because Wal-mart had shown no significant improvement in localization in China and was inefficient in promoting itself in second-level Chinese cities.

In a 2004 franchise

ranking made by the Ministry of Commerce, Wal-mart was listed 20th among 30 franchise retail giants, down four spots from 2003. Since China fully opened its retail market on December 1, B&Q North China Region, CTA Makro Commercial Beijing and Carrefour have all changed their presidents and senior executives.

Wal-mart China is expected to appoint a CEO and other executives to assist the new president.

New JV Insurer First to Cross Straits

By Qiu Jiaoning

A landmark insurance venture owned by China Eastern Air Holding Group, one of the Chinese mainland's top three airlines, and Cathay Life Insurance Co., the largest life insurer in Taiwan, has officially begun operations in Shanghai, Xinhua reported last Friday.

The two sides hold equal shares in the venture, Cathay Life Insurance Co. (Shanghai), which has around \$100 million in registered capital. Cathay Insurance is offering 10 products, including life insurance, bonus insurance and health insurance, as well as a new product called longtime health-care insurance, meant to help senior citizens deal with medical care costs.

"We should turn a profit within five to seven years, in line with the general pattern for life insurers. Our aim is stable growth,"

Zhang Fade, general manager of Cathay Life Insurance Co. (Shanghai) said at a press conference for the formal unveiling of the company last Thursday. Zhang said the joint venture had already accrued 70 million yuan in premiums since starting trial operations late last year.

"The insurance sector on the Chinese mainland is a fast-developing market that has seen a compound annual growth rate of over 37 percent in the last 10 years. Its life insurance market is expected to have a lot of room for growth in the future," Li Changgeng, chief strategic officer of Cathay Financial Holding Co. told the *Taipei Times* on Friday.

The establishment of the joint venture was approved by the China Insurance Regulatory Commission on December 24 last year and it received its business license four days later.

Two Chinese Retail Giants Join Forces

By Qiu Jiaoning

Shanghai-based Bailian Group and Dalian-based Dashang Group signed a contract in Dalian, Liaoning Province on Friday afternoon to set up a venture, Dashang International Co., Xinhua reported Tuesday.

Bailian will provide 45 percent of the venture's registered capital and Dashang's 40 percent in the form of state shares in Dashang Group, Bailian said in a statement on Friday. Another partner, Shanghua Investment Holding, will provide the remaining 15 percent of registered capital.

The two partners planned to build the new retail company into a large firm capable of generating 30 billion yuan of business within three years

and 50 billion yuan within five years, the Bailian statement said.

Dashang International would focus on automotive sales and services, pharmaceutical sales, e-commerce and real estate as well as retail business in the vast northeast and east China markets.

"The alliance will boost scale economy and reduce costs. Bailian will have a new source of income while Dashang will get new funds to expand," Hu Hongke, an analyst from China Merchants Securities in Shanghai was quoted as saying by Bloomberg on Sunday.

"Bailian will control the listed company through the venture and may list the new company in Hong Kong in the future," Hu said.

Anti-Tobacco Treaty Takes Effect

Geneva, February 27 (AP) – A global anti-tobacco treaty came into effect on Sunday, but leading experts said it needed strengthening quickly if it was to be effective in curbing smoking, which claims five million lives a year.

The treaty requires countries that ratify it to restrict tobacco advertising and sponsorship, put tougher health warnings on cigarettes and limit use of language like “low tar” and “light.”

Of the 168 countries that signed the accord, only 57 have ratified it. China and the US are among those that have not ratified the pact.

Dr. Derek Yach, the World Health Organization’s former anti-tobacco chief and the official who

oversaw the drafting of the treaty, hailed the accord, known as the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, as a first step.

The ratifying nations are to enact price and tax increases, create controls on secondhand smoke and sales of cigarettes to youngsters, and clamp down on smuggling.

The treaty, which was completed in May 2003, aims to reduce substantially the number of deaths from tobacco-related illnesses, like cancer and heart disease, which the WHO estimates kills one smoker every 6.5 seconds.

By 2010, the annual death toll is expected to double to 10 million, with 70 percent of the victims in developing countries least able to

pay for treating smoking-related illnesses. Ratifying countries that fail to enact reforms face no penalties.

Local Report:

“China signed the pact in November 2003; however, ratification is still in the process of legislation,” said Xiong Bilin, vice-director of the Industrial Department of the National Development and Reform Commission.

China is one of a few nations worldwide whose government dominates the public sales of tobacco. Tobacco is a big industry in China. As well as retail, tobacco planting and production accounts for a significant proportion of our country’s GDP and the tax revenue from the

industry accounts for one-tenth of China’s fiscal revenues per year. So controlling this industry is a tough job for our government.

China has carried out measures to avoid depletion of the ozone layer since 1992 and began efforts to restrain tobacco consumption in 2000.

China also restricts tobacco advertising in public, but more than 82 percent of teenagers are still exposed to tobacco advertising, according to a research report from the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The finding came as something of a surprise and indicated the difficulty of the task ahead.

– China Business News, February 28 (Deng Minjie)



Volunteers are distributing anti-tobacco leaflets to passersby in Shumann Square in Brussels Tuesday.

Xinhua Photo

Businessman Charged in \$200 Million Tax Case

Washington, February 28 (Reuters) – A US telecommunications entrepreneur has been arrested on charges of evading more than \$200 million in federal and local taxes in the largest criminal tax case involving an individual, the Justice Department said on Monday.

Walter Anderson, 51, engaged in an elaborate tax evasion scheme creating an offshore corporation to receive and hide income of nearly half a billion dollars over five years, according to the indictment.

Anderson was arrested on Saturday and, if convicted, could face up to 80 years in prison.

The 12-count indictment said Anderson claimed to be a resident of Florida, which has no state income tax, to avoid paying taxes in Washington, where he actually lived.

It accuses Anderson of failing to report income as required by federal and local laws as well as failing to pay about \$170 million in federal income taxes and \$40 million in income taxes to the city of Washington.

Anderson already owed the Internal Revenue Service hundreds of thousands of dollars in back taxes, interest and penalties for failing to pay federal income tax in prior years, the indictment said.

Yugansk Excluded from Merger

Moscow, March 2 (AFP) – Yuganskneftegas, the former crown jewel of embattled oil group Yukos, will be excluded from the merger of Russia’s gas giant Gazprom and the Rosneft state oil company, Gazprom chief Alexei Miller said.

“The final decision on joining Rosneft to Gazprom has been made,” Miller said in televised comments Wednesday.

“As a result of the merger, the government will receive a controlling stake in Gazprom in exchange for 100 percent shares in Rosneft without Yuganskneftegas,” he said. The Russian government currently holds nearly 38 percent of Gazprom.

Miller said Yugansk,

which was swallowed up by Rosneft late last year, will operate as a separate, state-owned oil firm headed by current Rosneft chief Sergei Bogdanchikov.

Once a mid-sized oil firm ranked seventh in Russia, Rosneft was catapulted into the top five by swallowing Yuganskneftegas, while Gazprom had to walk away from the auction because of fears it could provoke US judicial proceedings.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is believed to have set a strategic goal of restoring state control over key energy resources through the creation of a national oil and gas corporation that would outstrip Saudi Arabia’s Aramco.

PepsiCo to Curb Snack Advertising

Phoenix, February 28 (Financial Times) – PepsiCo, one of the world’s largest makers of soft drinks and snack foods, has introduced voluntary restrictions on its advertising to children, in response to rising levels of obesity in the US and western Europe.

The company, responsible for brands such as Pepsi-Cola and Doritos chips has also placed limits on the portion sizes of products sold in US schools.

The European Commission has threatened to outlaw advertising of food and drink to children if the industry does not change its behavior

and the UK government is considering red warning labels on fattening products.

PepsiCo executives and officials told the FT that the company was no longer advertising its flagship cola to children under 12 or its Cheetos chips brand to under-eights.

Irene Rosenfeld, the chief executive of Frito-Lay North America, PepsiCo’s snacks unit, said the company had replaced its fried Cheetos with a lower-fat baked alternative in elementary schools and limited serving sizes for all snacks to 150 calories, rising to 300 calories in middle schools.

New Video Game Rating

San Francisco, March 2 (Reuters) – The video game ratings system will add a new category to protect children under 10 from seeing certain kinds of violence, the board that administers the system said on Wednesday.

The Entertainment Software Rating Board said “E10+” would mark games that might contain “moderate amounts of cartoon, fantasy or mild violence, mild language and/or minimal suggestive themes.”

The E10+ rating will reside on the scale between “E,” meaning a game is appropriate for all ages, and “T,” meaning a game

for teenagers. The ratings system also includes “M” ratings for those over 17 and the rarely-used “AO” for adult audiences only.

The ESRB said it expected most top sports, racing and adventure games would continue to take an E rating, while racing games with graphic crashes and fighting games with superheroes would likely take an E10+.

The ESRB rates virtually every game released in the US. Its system has been praised by the federal government as one of the most effective in the media industry.

GE Expects Growth from Developing Nations

Stamford, March 2 (AP) – General Electric Co. expects 60 percent of its growth to come from developing countries in the next decade, compared to about 20 percent for the past decade, according to the company’s annual report.

Business with China should exceed \$5 billion this year, while GE is also targeting growing opportunities in Russia, India, eastern Europe, southeast Asia, the Middle East and South America, Jeffrey Immelt, the company’s chief execu-

tive, said in the report.

GE expects to return to double-digit profit growth this year after divesting \$15 billion of slow-growth assets and investing more than \$60 billion to create a faster-growing company, Immelt said.

The company has changed its approach to look at countries as customers, Immelt said. He cited Qatar, where GE has landed portions of the country’s liquid natural gas projects and is pursuing a major airline order and other business.



The overseas arm of India’s state-run Oil and Natural Gas Corp and its US partner Energy Red Sea Inc. won exploration rights for an oilfield in Egypt Tuesday, in an effort to ease the petrol shortage crisis in India.

Xinhua Photo

China Overtakes US as Top Consumer

Washington, February 16 (AFP) – China has replaced the United States as the world’s top consumer, eclipsing the world’s richest economy in consumption of four of the five basic food, energy and industrial commodities, a global environmental think tank said.

Growing at a rapid rate, China has taken the lion’s share in the consumption of grain, meat, coal and steel, and trails the US only in oil among the five basic commodities, according to the Washington-based Earth Policy Institute.

In another key area, fertilizer, China’s use is double that of the US, while among television sets, refrigerators and cellular phones, the world’s most populous nation is way ahead. And it will only be a matter of time before China overtakes the US in the use of personal computers. The number of PCs in China is doubling every 28 months, the report said.

“China’s eclipse of the US as a consumer nation should be seen as another milestone along the path of its evolution as a world economic leader,” Lester Brown, the institute’s president, told reporters.

“China is no longer just a developing country,” he said. “It is an emerging economic superpower, one that is writing economic history,” said Brown, a respected environmental analyst.

This may come as a blow to the US, which suffers a massive trade deficit with the Asian giant and is heavily dependent on Chinese capital to underwrite its fast-growing debt.

“If China ever decides to divert this capital surplus elsewhere, either to internal investment or to the development of oil, gas, and mineral resources elsewhere in the world, the US econ-

omy will be in trouble,” Brown said.

He warned that global dependence on the Chinese economy, with 1.3 billion people, for absorption of both raw materials and finished products could backfire if economic growth in China plunged.

Analyst’s Take:

A country’s consumption level is usually measured in terms of total consumption – of all goods, not just five basic ones – and consumption ratio. China’s total consumption only accounts for one tenth of America’s. Besides, the ratio of China’s consumption to GDP is much lower than America’s. So it stretches the truth to say that China has replaced the US as the world’s top consumer.

Annual US GDP is about \$11 trillion, 80 percent of which is used for its domestic consumption; China’s GDP is \$1.4 trillion, 60 percent of which goes to domestic consumption. That is to say, the US consumes US\$8 trillion worth of products annually while China consumes US\$800 billion.

We cannot deny that China leads in consumption for certain products such as wheat and rice. But such consumption products do not reflect a high level of economic development. Although China’s steel usage is now more than twice that of the US, some of the final products made from China’s steel, such as DVDs, are consumed in the US market.

The two countries’ foreign trade can reflect their consumption levels to a certain degree. China’s foreign trade is in surplus, meaning that the country’s consumption capacity is lower than its production capacity; the US is just the opposite.

As it stands, China remains a country with a low consumption level while the US is still the world’s top consumer. However, the low consumption situation conforms to China’s current development stage, which needs more investment than consumption in order to accumulate capital and ensure the country’s economic growth.

– Yao Zhizhong, of the Institute of World Economics and Politics under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, interviewed by China Business on February 26 (Qiu Jiaoning)

Argentine President: Debt Swaps a Success

Buenos Aires, March 1 (AP) – President Nestor Kirchner on Tuesday declared a gigantic global debt swap a success, telling Congress that Argentina’s record \$103 billion default has been surmounted.

“We are recovering from our worst crisis in history,” Kirchner said in an annual address to Congress only days after last week’s swap on debt dating to a 2001-2002 economic debacle.

In a speech, the president said he had defied the expert forecasts and managed to successfully complete the restructuring of defaulted debt – what he called a “drastic diminution” in the debt load.

Some market forecasts predicted as many as 75 percent of all creditors had accepted a recent government swap offer intended to end Argentina’s status as an international financial pariah three years after the country’s financial meltdown.

Last Friday was the deadline for investors holding defaulted Argentine debt to accept a government offer to pay back about a third of their original investment – the worst losses for holders of government bonds anywhere in recent history.

The deal represented bondholder losses of about 70 percent – much greater than under deals offered by Ecuador and Russia after those countries restructured debt in the 1990s for losses of 35 percent and 30 percent respectively, according to analysts.



McDonald's Says Price Cuts Not Tied to Dangerous Dye

By Liu Zhaoxi

Chinese consumers turned their attention to a seemingly routine reduction of the prices for McDonald's double cheese burger and McChicken sandwiches on February 23 after four types of McDonald's supplies were put on the UK government's alert list of foods possibly contaminated by the illegal carcinogenic dye Sudan I. But Irene Zhang, corporate relations manager at McDonald's (China) Co. told *Beijing Today* on Monday that the price changes had nothing to do with the feared dye.

The UK's Food Standards Agency (FSA) on February 21 named certain low fat and regular Caesar dressing, Western barbeque sauce and Dijon mustard-mayonnaise products believed used by McDonald's among a list of hundreds of potentially contaminated products.

Two days later, McDonald's restaurants across China cut the prices of the two sandwiches to 8 yuan from 10 yuan.

Zhang told *Beijing Today* that McDonald's products in China did not contain Sudan I. "Ninety-seven percent of China McDonald's raw materials are

purchased domestically," Zhang said, adding the four foods named on the FSA list were not sold in this country.

An official from the Beijing Bureau of Inspection and Quarantine, who declined to be named, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday that inspections had turned up no traces of Sudan I in McDonald's food supplies in Beijing.

The FSA announced on February 18 that the illegal dye had been found in a wide range of foods sold in the UK. It advised people not to eat the named foods and pledged to work with

the food industry and local authorities to ensure affected foods were removed from store shelves and restaurant kitchens.

Chinese food inspection authorities reacted quickly and introduced the list in this country. Last Friday, the Beijing Bureau of Inspection and Quarantine issued a notice to local food dealers, department stores and supermarkets, asking them to check recently imported food products and remove any on the list from their shelves.

By February 24, the number of affected food products on the FSA list reached 575.

Man Suing Hospital over Birth Tragedy

By Jia Ting

Xicheng District Court on Monday began hearing a lawsuit filed by a man whose wife gave birth to a test-tube baby against Beijing University People's Hospital. The plaintiff has charged the hospital with making malpractice leading to his wife's death two months after their baby was born and demanded 1.3 million yuan in compensation.

Mr. Fang and his two lawyers attended the trial and brought two large suitcases filled with paper files and other evidence to back his case. But the plaintiff refused media requests for an interview as he entered the courtroom.

"Here's all the information you may need. I can't bear to go through the tragic events again," he was quoted as saying by *Beijing News* on Tuesday.

Fang previously worked as chief representative for a foreign company in Beijing, but quit his job after his wife's death and returned to his hometown of Wuhan, Hubei Province along with his infant daughter.

Information provided by Fang showed his wife underwent artificial insemination procedures in 2003. In June last year, doctors diagnosed her with symptoms of abnormal pregnancy and recommended inducing birth as soon as possible. From June 24 to 28, she received five injections of medication to hasten birth that caused her great pain.

Fang reportedly asked doctors to try other options, but they insisted natural birth was the best way. After 15 hours of labor, Fang's wife gave birth to their daughter on June 27, 2004. But the mother's condition quickly deteriorated and she fell into a coma.

Doctors at Beijing University People's Hospital removed her uterus while she was unconscious. Fang's wife died on September 18.

"If the hospital had changed their treatment, this tragedy may have been avoided," Fang said.

He has accused the hospital of negligence leading to his wife's death because evidence reportedly shows she was not strong enough to handle natural birth.

The defense maintained that the hospital strictly followed standard practices in treating Fang's wife and consistently informed Fang and his family about her condition. The hospital's lawyer said the doctors were not guilty of malpractice and could not be held responsible for what happened.

The court has not issued its verdict on the case.

Traffic Swamped by Third Ring Road Flood



Photo by Cui Jun

By Zhou Ying

A water pipe blew near Sanyuan Qiao bridge on Tuesday afternoon and the busy section of the East Third Ring Road was quickly submerged.

The pipe under the secondary road next to the major artery in Chaoyang District broke around 3 pm, and within 10 minutes the road was rendered unpassable, *Beijing Youth Daily* said.

"Water kept gushing from the pipe like a fountain. It reached knee-high and some people could be seen walking along the main elevated part of the Third Ring Road," the report said.

Local traffic police quickly arrived at the scene to temporarily guide cars through, while workers from Beijing Water Group cut nearby water locks to end the deluge. They also provided three emergency water supply wagons to guarantee nearby residents would have access to water.

Beijing Water Group manager Zhang Jing told *Beijing Youth Daily* at the scene that the incident was likely triggered by excessive exploitation of groundwater, raising pressure inside the pipe.

The water drained and the road dried by 5 pm, allowing traffic flow to return to normal.

Doctors Knifed by Angry Husband

By Jia Ting

Two surgeons at Jishuitan Hospital in Xicheng District were rushed into emergency treatment on Monday morning after they were stabbed by the husband of a patient.

The husband attacked the doctors after his request for an extra bed so he could keep his wife company was turned down with the explanation that all hospital beds were needed for patients, the hospital said in a statement issued later that day.

The man's wife checked into Jishuitan Hospital on February 17 and asked surgery department head Dr. Tian Guanglei to remove a steel plate that was used to fix a broken bone in her fore-



The suspect (second from left) and his wife were taken away by police after the incident.

Photo by Pu Feng

arm in May 1999. The procedure should have been done five years ago and because it had been so long, the difficulty of the surgery was greatly increased, a hospital doctor surnamed Han told *Beijing Today*.

"The doctors warned the patient about the consider-

able risks before the surgery," Dr. Han said.

Tian and another surgeon made three unsuccessful attempts to remove the plate using various tools. When they finally got it off the bone, they caused a new fracture in the same place as the patient's old injury.

The patient's husband was irate and questioned whether Tian had actually taken part in the operation, the statement said. After the bed incident, the man struck out at the two doctors with a knife and stabbed them both in the chest.

The doctors were rushed to the emergency room and underwent surgery. They are in stable condition and the husband is in police custody.

Forgotten Bag Sparks Bomb Scare



Policemen set up detectors around the suspicious suitcase. photo by Zeng Lixiao

By Liu Zhaoxi

A green suitcase found lying on the ground in front of a hotel near Qianmen prompted a bomb scare that brought police and a member of the local bomb squad rushing to the site on Wednesday morning. But an hour after the bag was found, a man came to reclaim what turned out to have been simply a piece of lost luggage.

Within half an hour of the suitcase found at 9 am discovery, police had strung warning lines around the bag and

scores of officers kept cars and pedestrians from entering the danger zone, the *Beijing Daily Messenger* reported on Thursday. Around 10 pm, a bomb expert arrived and used a blade to carefully slice open the case and began carefully removing its contents.

The crowd that assembled around the scene started laughing when the case yielded nothing but clothing. Police removed the warning lines soon after, the newspaper said.

At almost the same time,

two men arrived at the hotel in a taxi. One, who only gave his surname, Ding, said the suitcase was his and told the newspaper he forgot the bag when he jumped into a cab that morning. The things inside the case were only his identification card and some clothes, he said.

Ding and his companion, surnamed Sun, said they had traveled to Beijing from their native Jiangsu Province for work.

Sun said, "We never thought anything like this would happen."

Regular Chinese Have Right Stuff for Space Travel

By Kang Lu

Chinese people with the money will should be able to venture into space in the near future since US-based space tour firm Space Adventures and Hong Kong's Space Tourism Co. signed an agreement on Monday in Shenzhen to offer services in the domestic market.

A Chinese businessman had already paid a heavy deposit to Space Adventures last year, making him the likely first Chinese space tourist, the company said. His application had been approved and if everything went according to plan, the businessman would undertake a sub-orbital flight with a short stretch of zero gravity next year. The thrill ride will cost him millions of yuan.

The companies are offering four space-related packages in the China market: zero gravity

training, fighter jet flight training, which is done on the group, sub-orbital flights and orbital ventures. They vary wildly in price, but none are cheap.

The first group of about 20 Chinese tourists is planned to go to the US in May on a 16-day space culture tour, the companies said. The event, priced at hundreds of thousands of yuan per person, would include ground training and a visit to the launch center of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

John Moltzan, director of global sales for Space Adventures, noted that only Russia and the US currently permitted commercial development of the space tourism industry.

HK Space Tourism Co. said it would open an office in Shenzhen soon and offices in Beijing and Shanghai were in the works.

Consumer Crusader Blockaded in Xi'an

By Zhou Ying

China's most famous consumer rights advocate, Wang Hai, had to finish a press conference he was giving at the halfway mark when he was shouted down by an agitated stranger in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province on Sunday.

He was interrupted by Yang Kui, chairman of the board of Xi'an Lifan Co. Yang told the local *Huashang* newspaper before the conference that he knew Wang was going to criticize his company's products.

"I came over to confront Wang and tell him there were no problems with our products," he later said.

In the suddenly heated event, Yang demanded Wang identify on whose behalf he was holding the new conference, the newspaper reported.

"I'm doing it on behalf of my client," Wang, who works as a consultant, replied.

"I'll tell everybody the truth. He's doing it on behalf of our company's competitor," Yang said, holding up a document showing that Hongda Road Construction Co., another Xi'an-based company, had booked the conference room at the local hotel.

Wang calmly explained that Hongda was his client and told

Yang he was rude for showing up without invitation.

According to materials provided by Wang, Hongda spent 168,000 yuan to buy a road roller from Lifan Co. two years ago, but later found the machine did not live up to Lifa's advertised claims and seriously impeded progress at a construction project. When they were unable to get their money back, Hongda's managers turned to Wang Hai.

Yang claimed his company had no connection to Hongda - "I checked our records and we have never sold any products to them," he added.

Wang produced a contract signed by Yang claiming to take full responsibility for the matter, but the Lifa chairman raised doubts about the document's authenticity. The two quarreled for two hours before Wang conceded that the news conference was over and he left the room with a hotel staff member protecting him.

The consumer crusader told *Huashang* on Sunday evening that he never held public activities without first carefully investigating matters and preparing.

"I'm going to continue pursuing this case," Wang said. "I certainly never expected the news conference would end like that."



Yang Kui(left)confronts consumer rights advocate Wang Hai

Photo by Wang Peng

Imposter Job Agency Preyed on Jobless

By Jia Ting

Chaoyang District police announced on Tuesday they had cracked a criminal group that swindled money from people by pretending to run a job recruitment agency. Nine suspects from Detai Jiaye Co., the front organization for the illegal activities, have been taken into custody.

Apparently, the gang preyed on many people's desperation to get gainful employment in the capital's increasingly competitive job market. The group stands accused of publishing recruiting advertisements in popular media in Beijing promising applicants attractive jobs and then collecting commissions on services never provided. None of the applicants that went to the company ended up with a job, the police said.

"In January, I saw an ad that Detai Jiaye was recruiting a driver," one victim, Mr. Li, told the police. "I went to the company for an interview and they seemed very interested and even suggested I go for an assistant manager position, which would pay 3,500 yuan a month. Of course I accepted, but I had to pay an application fee and a deposit that added up to 5,800 yuan."

The next day when Li went back to the office, he was told he was not qualified for the job and told to leave.

"When I asked to have my deposit back, they refused. And the next time I raised the question, things got even worse, they even threatened to beat me," he said.

The police said their investigation had shown dozens of people, mostly local laid-off workers or people from other provinces, had been swindled by Detai Jiaye. They were not able to get their deposits back because they had failed to read the fine print on contracts, which said the company would charge 10 to 30 percent of applicants' deposits as service fees if applicants acted to end their contracts.

Main suspect Xie Junyang, 24, from Heilongjiang Province, set up Detai Jiaye Co. last August. He had earned enough from the scam to buy three cars, a Mercedes Benz S320 and a Volkswagen Bora and Jetta, police said.

The police said they believed there must be more victims of the job swindle and asked anyone with experience or information to contact the Chaoyang District police department at 8595 3570.



One of Sun Daolin's best known images, taken in the 1980s.

How Much for an Interview?



A recent picture of Sun Daolin. Photos by Jiefang Daily

By Manroe

Last Thursday, *Yangcheng Wanbao*, a local evening newspaper in Guangzhou, reported that famous actor and director, Sun Daolin, had demanded payment before agreeing to be interviewed. According to the newspaper, it refused to pay and was refused by Sun as a result. Sun, 83, has starred in 30 films and directed 10 films in the last 50 years, winning many awards both at home and abroad. Discussions about Sun's demands have been surprisingly heated since the report. Is it reasonable for people to expect to be paid for interviews? **Sun Daolin**, actor and director: **it's about protecting intellectual property rights**

I did ask for payment before the interview, but I have to say that I do not demand payment for every interview. It depends on the time length and purpose of the interview, among other things. One of the reasons for asking for a payment is that too many interviews are a burden to me, as I am at an advanced age. So I choose this way to refuse some of them. Also, I need to point out that the payment I demanded was to protect the intellectual property rights that might be related to the interview. Another thing I would like to mention is one of my experiences with CCTV. They pay their interviewees at a satisfactory rate.

Li Liangrong, a journalism and communication professor at Fudan

University: **people are not obliged to give interviews**

Artists do not have to provide information. Giving interviews is an individual activity. Why shouldn't they ask for payment for the interviews?

Yu Guoming, vice president of the faculty of journalism at People's University: **this will harm the social environment**

The idea of paying for interviews is harmful to public interest. Simply applying commercial practices to cultural fields may increase the suspicion that anything can be bought by money. This may mislead the media to pay attention only to elites, ignoring weaker people. This would unbalance the media's function of maintaining social stability.

Fu Ping, overseas Chinese: **it's quite normal**

I think it is quite normal. I am now living in Canada. Famous people here also get paid for interviews. Even an ordinary citizen gets paid for participating in a story. I consider that the time spent in an interview should be viewed as working time, which should be paid for. It is especially so for a famous person like Sun Daolin.

Liu Yan, journalist: **there are benefits to this**

I admire Sun's approach. In a market economy, we should recognize that it's reasonable for interviews to be paid for. It could even have benefits. First, the competition between different media organiza-

tions would be more intense, which would optimize the market principle of only the strong surviving. Second, it would increase product quality, filtering out some of the rubbish news. This may also help news, especially entertainment news, become more truthful. Third, it would help to judge stars' market value.

Wen Guojian, student: **why should the media pay him for an interview?**

As an ordinary citizen, Sun Daolin certainly has the right to enjoy his freedom. So from a legal point of view, Sun should not be criticized. He may refuse an interview or ask to get paid. However, as a famous artist, he should realize that his popularity would be impossible without support from the media and audience. Why should the media pay him for an interview? The fact that he demands to be paid for an interview proves that he is not grateful to society, the media or his audience for what he has got.

Zhang Guoli, famous Chinese actor: **Sun's self-respect and courage are admirable**

As Sun said himself, he does not need this sort of income to make a living. I think he is doing this for his clear-minded recognition of his own value. Nevertheless, it needs great courage, because you have to deal with the social pressure.

Gong Wenying, student from Guangxi: **there are shortcomings to paid news**

Maybe some people think this

is no big deal. However, is it that simple? I believe there are at least three shortcomings to the idea of the media having to pay for information. First, it would influence the public's right to know. Under a paid-for news system, only a small number of media organizations would be rich enough to "play the game". Thus, we run the risk that the public would not have enough channels to get broader knowledge about many issues. Second, paid news would influence the accuracy of the information. Third, just as professor Yu has said, a paid news system would influence the public benefit.

Zhu Jun, CEO of Admire Tech. Ltd.: **we should view this issue from both points of view**

I believe that as an artist, Sun should be selfless in allowing people to know more about a part of Chinese film history which he has witnessed and experienced. He should not place monetary value on his knowledge. If he really wants to protect his intellectual property rights, he can refuse all interviews and use the time to write a book instead.

But from the other point of view, society should realize the great value of artists like Sun Daolin, and try to provide an adequate system to appreciate their true value. If this were to be achieved, I believe the Chinese film industry and many other kinds of arts would have a prosperous future.

(Edited by Lene Chau)

We Don't Need No Hi-technology

By Liu Zhaoxi

A cutting-edge fingerprint identification system was installed in a Shanghai elementary school at the start of the new semester last week. Shixi Elementary School intended to use the system to record the attendance of students, as well as their departures from the campus. On Monday, however, following intense public and media questioning, the machine was removed by the school before it was actually put into use.

The device was intended to guard the safety of the campus. Students' fingerprints of both index fingers were collected in advance. When they entered the school they would need to put one of their index fingers on the machine for it to read their print. This way, strangers could be stopped outside the gate since the machine would not recognize them. For an extra fee, the system could also send text messages to the cell phones of students' parents, informing them of the time when their kids arrive at or leave the school.

The system generated considerable interest among the media and debate soon followed. *Beijing Youth Daily* invited five commentators, including a law professor and lawyers, to discuss the issue. They expressed concerns over the violation of personal freedom and privacy the system could cause. There were also parents questioning whether they should pay for the text messages. These parents said it was the school's responsibility to supervise the arrival and departure of students, so parents should enjoy the service for free.

A teacher at Shixi school, who did not want to be named, told Shanghai-based *Oriental Morning Post* that too much attention from the media pressed the school into dropping the whole system.

The principal of Shixi school, who only gave her surname Cai, declined to comment on the issue. "It's only an internal administration project," she told *Beijing Today*. "The media coverage has affected the normal order of our school," she complained.

Ran Naiyan, consultant at Beijing Academy of Education Science: **the school should institute the system anyway**

To install an advanced device in school is not unusual. The key issue is its purpose. If the school uses the device for the sake of students' safety, that's a good thing. The school should stick to its own ideas about how to run things and go ahead with it despite the controversy. To say that such a device would violate human rights is superficial. Respect for human rights would not change just because of the use of a machine. More and more advanced devices are going to be used in schools. What is important is how to use them to get the most benefit.

Rong Feixue, associate principal of Huajia Elementary School: **removing the system is unnecessary**

The system can provide convenience for school man-

agement and makes clear the responsibility for students' safety between school and parents. If one morning there was no fingerprint record for a child, for example, that means he or she did not come to school. So if something happens to the child, the school should not shoulder the responsibility. By the same token, the system records it if students arrive, and from that point until they leave, the school is responsible for their safety. I don't see how this can hurt anybody. The Shanghai school has already invested a lot in the system. If it's controversial, maybe it should not be promoted to other schools, but it's unnecessary to remove it.

Yang Xichang, parent of an elementary school student: **they should try the system**

I think the system has more benefits than problems. At least it lets parents know where their children are. It's really a pity that the school removed the system before it was even put into use. They should have tried it for a while. But now it's gone before its advantages and disadvantages can be seen.

Wang Lei, associate professor of law at Beijing University: **it's illegal to collect students' finger prints**

I think it violates the personal freedom of the students. More seriously, it touches upon their human rights. Most countries around the world have not established laws concerning collecting citizens' fingerprints. The government could not force every citizen to go to the police office to leave their fingerprints for the sake of dealing with public order. It's illegal for the school to collect students' fingerprints. (from *Beijing Youth Daily*) **Ju Cunxu**, lawyer at Beijing Qiankun Law Firm: **it's not about personal freedom, but about privacy**

The system only records the time when the students enter and leave the school but doesn't affect their going in and out of the school gate. So it doesn't involve the issue of students' personal freedom. It should be pointed out, however, that the system could involve disputes over students' right to privacy. Students have the right to privacy over their personal fingerprints. If students agree to let the school use their fingerprints, the school should guard the information carefully. If the school allowed the fingerprint to be leaked, it could cause a violation of a student's rights, and the school would be held liable. (from *Beijing Youth Daily*)

Fan Bosong, lawyer at Beijing Shijia Law Firm: **about the fee issue**

State schools are not-for-profit institutions and are prohibited from charging fees to students and their custodians without legitimate reasons. In this case, the fee for the text message is decided and charged by the phone service providers, not the school. If the parents pay the fee to the organizations of their own will, there is nothing to complain about. (from *Beijing Youth Daily*)



Children and their parents continue their school runs without the fingerprint identification system. Photo by Zhang Dong

"She was about to marry her beloved. She was full of life, a good soul, always ready to help," said **Helen Solomon-Ziebinsky**, mother of Yael Orbach, 28, who was killed at a Tel Aviv nightclub Friday by a suicide bombing when giving out wedding invitations to her friends at the surprise party along with her fiancé Ofir Gonen. The bombing killed four of the revelers and wounded dozens of other people at the club, including Yael's fiancé.

"The martyrs may be more because there are a number of body parts to be counted," said **Mahmoud Abdul Reda**, a health official, after a suicide car bomber blew himself up next to dozens

of police and national guards recruits Monday as they lined up outside a medical clinic south of Baghdad, killing at least 115 people and wounding 132, the single deadliest attack since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

"We will continue the sit-in every day until the Syrian army leaves Lebanon and until the truth is determined in Hariri's assassination," said **Sami Makhlouf**, an 18-year-old student waving Lebanon's red and white flag. Elated at forcing out Lebanon's pro-Damascus government, flag-waving protesters crowded downtown Beirut on Tuesday, as Syrian President Bashar Assad indicated he would withdraw Syria's 15,000 troops

from Lebanon "maybe in the next few months".

"It is a question of perception. It is very important not to give the impression to the world that there is a step back or a reinterpretation of this issue," said **Nicole Ameline**, France's minister for parity and equality, opposing a move by the United States to push a UN conference into stating that women do not have the right to abortion.

"We are in a war here, but we don't really know against whom," said a 29-year-old Haitian officer at the funeral of four officers allegedly killed by ex-soldiers. Mistrusted by residents who have seen political regimes use the police as brutal en-

forcers, Haiti's police are once again being blamed for operation above the law.

"The Holy Father spoke to me in German and Italian. He was very alert. He will be working on some of the documentation that I brought to him. I am very happy to see the Holy Father is very alert, both mentally and in his capacity to say essential things with his own voice," said Cardinal **Joseph Ratzinger**, the guardian of Roman Catholic doctrine, minutes after seeing the Pope, which stunned many, since even some medical experts had said the 84-year-old Pope might not regain the use of his voice for weeks.



Miners at the gate of the Sunjiawan mine for information about the February 14 accident that killed 214.

The Dark Side of Development

China struggles to improve safety in deadly mining industry

By Dong Nan

Five days into Spring Festival, the holiday took a tragic turn and the nation was shocked as 214 miners were killed at a mine in Fuxin, Liaoning Province.

Far from an isolated incident, the tragedy was the third major mine disaster in China within only four months.

While rescue workers tried to bring miners trapped underground to safety, China's public and the government began talking tough about truly making the notoriously dangerous mining industry safer.

String of tragedies

The disaster in Liaoning occurred around 3 pm on February 14, when gas exploded approximately 242 meters underground at the Sunjiawan coalmine. Of the 574 miners inside at the time, 330 managed to escape and the rest were trapped far beneath the Earth. Eventually 29 were rescued, but the rest died inside the mine.

Sunjiawan coalmine, which employs 3,100 people, belongs to Fuxin Coal Industry Group. The group's president, Liang Jinfa, and Liu Guoqiang, vice governor of Liaoning Province, were suspended from duties following the accident, the cause of which is still being investigated.

The death toll at Sunjiawan made it the worst coalmine disaster in China in 44 years shortly after that dubious record was set by another gas explosion in Chenjiashan, Shaanxi Province last November that killed 166 miners.

A week before the tragedy at Chenjiashan, a fire broke out in a mining shaft and gas density was running at dangerous levels, investigators uncovered after the accident. But the mine's operators decided not to stop production and even threatened miners afraid to go down the shaft with pay cuts and dismissal.

"If they had stopped production and ventilated the shaft to reduce the gas density, the explosion would not have happened," a village party secretary who did not give his name told Xinhua.

Two months before, 147 miners died in an explosion at a mine in Daping, Henan Province.

Smaller scale accidents have become commonplace in recent years. When 12 miners were killed last June in Handan, Hebei Province at one of north China's longest-running coalmines, managers tried to hide the truth and told the media that only one person died. The

same month, a shaft in a mine in the Beijing suburb of Daanshan collapsed, trapping 10 miners for four days. They all died before rescuers could reach them.

Dangers natural and man-made

China produced 35 percent of the world's coal, but suffered 80 percent of the world's mining casualties, the State Administration of Work Safety said in a work report issued last December. The casualty rate in China for every million tons of coal mined was 100 times that of the US, 30 times more than in South Africa and 10 times more than in India, the report said.

More than 95 percent of China's coal mines were underground, and underground mines were inherent-

Chen added.

That demand is likely to only fuel more accidents, because many existing coal mines have been depleted over decades of exploration, forcing operators to dig deeper and deeper and making conditions even more dangerous by raising gas density in formerly low density shafts.

Controlling gas density means bringing in necessary equipment, and that can be expensive. The cost of significantly dropping gas density at a mine with an annual output of one million tons of coal is around 50,000 to 100,000 yuan, money that many mines have proven reluctant to spend.

Even when needed equipment is used, the full-bore drive for profits by mine operators may mean problems are still inevitable. Chenjiashan, one of Shaanxi's key mines, has top-of-the-line gas monitors in shafts capable of monitoring gas levels around the clock and immediately reporting danger. But after the explosion at the mine, investi-

cials to get more contracts and have authorities overlook safety problems at their dangerous mines.

Environmental protection expert Bu Guisheng told *Orientation Outlook*, a weekly magazine run by Xinhua, that after every accident and every death at small coal mines, owners tried to hide the truth from the public and the media by any means, including firing miners who knew details of the accidents and recruiting unwitting new employees.

Miners with no choices

China has more than seven million miners, greater than the sum of all miners in every other country of the world.

In decades past, under the planned economy system, Chinese miners used to enjoy high salaries and attractive benefits. Cheng Yu-anshan, previously worked as a low-ranking administrator in the coalmine industry and earned 50 yuan a month, less than standard 60 to 70 yuan a month given to miners. In those days, even some college graduates were willing to go down mines.

Today, many miners earn less than farmers. In 2002, the average monthly income of miners at state-owned mines, who generally earn more than employees of privately-owned mines, was 901 yuan, ranking 48th out of 49 industries.

Many miners do not receive any payment at all, as wage defaults are common around the country. At the end of 2001, 70 state-owned coalmines alone owed 6.3 billion yuan in back pay to their employees.

Seven of 37 people killed in a gas explosion at a mine in Baixing, Heilongjiang Province last February were migrant workers from Sichuan Province. The others were local residents and laid-off workers. After the accident, many local people told domestic media that it was not a secret that the coal mine was very dangerous, but miners had no choice but to put their lives on the line every day because they had no other means of earning money.

Li Ping, 24, a miner who survived last October's disaster at the Daping coalmine, continued to work there along with his father and brother, *Oriental Outlook* said. He told the magazine, "The happiest time in my life comes every day, the moment I finish my work and make it out of the mine."

Though previous intervention has had limited effect, the government has responded to the latest series of mining tragedies by calling for the enhancement of safety in the industry. The day after 214 people died at the Sunjiawan mine, the State Administration of Work Safety held an emergency meeting and demanded all provinces and regions of China to immediately check of the safety condition at their coalmines.

Thinking Globally, But Not Acting Locally

By Dong Nan

Most people in China are not optimistic about the country's deteriorating environment, though many are not ready to personally take action to reverse the negative trend, a survey on people's attitudes towards environmental protection conducted online by *China Youth Daily* and *Sina.com* found.

Nearly all respondents said they believed China faced significant environmental problems – 78 percent said they thought the situation was "very serious" and 21 percent said it was "serious."

Between 76 percent and 65 percent of respondents said they had some knowledge about global environmental issues such as global warming, depletion of the ozone layer and acid rain, but most admitted they did not have a deep understanding. Less than 20 percent said they "knew a lot" about any of the three topics.

While many people seem to know the risks of damaging the environment, few seem to translate that into personal action. When asked, "have you sorted your garbage into recyclables and non-recyclables in the last year?" 50 percent answered

"sometimes" and 25 percent "never." Responding to the question "do you bring bags when shopping to save plastic bags?" 56 percent said never and 19 percent sometimes.

Even fewer were interested in public activities related to environmental protection. More than 70 percent of respondents said they had never participated in donations for environmental causes or activities run by civil environment groups or helped with the upkeep of public parks or trees.

Only 34 percent said they would voluntarily send used batteries to recycling spots and the same proportion volunteered to not use disposable, one-off wood chopsticks.

In the final question, the survey asked participants to rank their personal sense of environmental protection on a scale of one, the lowest, up to five. Just under half chose the middle path, three points, 32 percent gave themselves four and 10 percent two points, while only seven percent selected five and two percent admitted to a one.

Survey Information:

The online survey was done by China Youth Daily and Sina.com and involved 1,421 people.



A village hospital in Yunnan Province

Photo by Cao Jiaxiang

Health Care System Ailing in Rural Areas

By Wang Chun

This month, the Development Research Center under the State Council completed a large-scale survey of medical care and sanitation facilities in rural areas to determine the state of health care in China's vast countryside. Investigators were sent to around 25 different regions and cities, covering 118 villages in 114 counties, and 1,000 rural families were involved.

Most people in the areas checked had access to potable water, the study found, but sanitation standards in public toilets were generally poor. Hospitalization rates were also low.

Though going to hospitals for childbirth has become common practice in rural China, the costs, ranging from hundreds to thousands of yuan, drove many people in underdeveloped areas to still choose cheaper midwifery, the survey report said.

More than 93 percent of the villages checked offered residents inoculation services and 86 percent offered reimbursement for vaccination costs.

For 70 percent of the rural respondents, local clinics were the top choice for medical treatment. But those facilities were generally small, poorly equipped and had limited stocks of medicines. And around 20 percent of clinic employees were not qualified village health practitioners. Such a situation

meant the clinics were not able to give competent emergency medical care to rural people in need, the survey said.

Privately-owned companies and facilities provided the vast majority, some 80 percent, of health care services in the countryside, it found. Their services were generally better than those at village-run infirmaries and clinics in terms of price, quality and convenience.

Nearly 73 percent of rural health service payments went to covering medicines, while just 4.4 percent went to treatment and 2.2 percent to prevention. Village-level clinics received almost no funding from higher authorities, the study found, with only 7.5 percent getting finite subsidies from the state.

Similarly, most of the rural people surveyed no longer enjoyed any state-sponsored medical care coverage, putting them at risk of having to personally bear the burden of rising costs. The cost of full treatment for a major illness averaged 7,051 yuan, the study showed, a number that represents more than what most rural people earn in two years. Some 40 percent of families checked had descended into poverty due to the costs of a family member's medical treatment.

China's national welfare and rural medical care systems were in desperate need of structural reform, the survey concluded.



Rescue workers carry one of 147 victims of a September 2004 accident out from the Daping coalmine in Henan Province. Photos by Xinhua

ly more dangerous than surface mines, Cheng Yuanping, a professor from the Energy and Safety Engineering Department at China University of Mining and Technology told *Beijing Today*. Cheng added that gas explosions were the most frequent causes of accidents in domestic mines.

The global mining industry divided mines into low gas density shafts and high gas density shafts, he explained. Because of natural conditions, many mines in China had high gas density and were otherwise poor – deep and with little ventilation – and removing gas before exploration was a difficult, potentially expensive task, Cheng said.

In the US and Australia, according to him, mines with complicated geological conditions and poor ventilation capacity were normally ordered sealed, but China could not make a similar move because coal produced nearly two-thirds of total energy supplies in this power-hungry country.

China's economic boom meant there would be no end to the desperate demand for coal to turn into energy in the near future,

gators found the people in charge of gas monitoring regularly covered the sensors with plastic bags to keep them from ringing the alarm and halting production.

Black gold

The average price for one ton of coal in China is 120 yuan, 10 times the production cost.

If coal does not come cheap, miners' lives apparently do. Average payment to the family of a miner killed in a work accident – the "price" of his life – was 100,000 yuan in mine-heavy Inner Mongolia, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported.

The Chinese government launched a campaign to close down small and dangerous coal mines in 1999 and 11,822 were shut in 2001. But those small mines accounted for nearly one half of national coal output, and when domestic energy shortages and increasing coal exports fueled a spike in coal prices, owners of hundreds of mines previously deemed too small or too dangerous resumed production.

Some owners tried to cover their actions by contracting legal, state-owned coalmines. They then used their large, quick profits to bribe offi-

After the AIDS scandal broke out, the center raised its walls and installed security cameras.

Photo by Wang Lei

HIV

Spreads at Drug Rehab Center

By Liu Zhaoxi

Li Anhua had not seen her son Zhao Feng for two years since he was sent to the Fujian Province drug-rehabilitation center. Zhao had vowed not to see his mother till he had successfully quit his drug habit.

The silence was broken only when a stranger phoned Li to tell her Zhao Feng was dying. Li immediately went to the center to see her son. She discovered Zhao had been infected with HIV.

Documents from the Fujian Justice Department show that since April 2004, at least 43 detainees in the rehab center have been found to be HIV-positive. Among the infected, 17 remain in detention. The others have all either been released, transferred to other centers or handed over for medical treatment. There are altogether over 1,000 drug addicts at the center.

Family members and authorities admitted that the reason for the spread of the lethal virus at the center was probably the secret shared use by addicts of needles to keep on taking illicitly acquired drugs. Some addicts at the center also alleged collusion on the part of corrupt staff at the supposedly tightly guarded center.

Tested positive

The infected members of the center did not know when the disease began to circulate.

In early June 2004, six detainees tested positive for HIV. They were among scores of detainees selected to receive an HIV test. In fact, this was the first ever HIV test conducted at the center, and it was only carried out because some experts had recommended it to the provincial authorities. Hong Yongkai, deputy chief of Fujian Prison Administration said.

In September, every single detainee had a blood test. Although officials did not tell them the purpose of the test, the detainees secretly asked the physicians and discovered the answer: they were "testing for AIDS."

No one told the detainees the test results, but they noticed some changes taking place, such as more electronic hair shavers becoming available, and traditional needles in the clinic being replaced by disposable ones. In addition, experts were invited to give lectures on AIDS and quar-

antine rooms were refurbished.

The center did not inform the infected detainees about their condition until last month, when six of them were released.

Where did it come from?

Officials from the center blamed the shared use of needles by detainees secretly maintaining their habit. The detainees also said the re-usable glass syringes in the clinic were the most likely medium for the disease, but the hair shavers shared by hundreds and tattoo tools made by a detainee might also have been responsible.

But how did the drugs get into the

The detainees suspect the source of the disease was the re-usable glass syringes in the clinic, but the hair shavers and tattoo tools may also have been responsible.

center? It turns out they were mainly purchased by detainees who had been released and who then sent the drugs back to the center in various ways. Some sewer workers played courier for the drugs. In other cases, detainees threw a long string outside the wall and those waiting outside attached packages of drugs. Some even pasted drugs behind stamps and mailed them to the center.

"We're considering purchasing sniffer dogs and detecting devices to prevent drugs from getting in," Liu Dengming, vice director of the center said.

One problem the detainees at the center had to overcome was that cash is the only currency accepted when buying drugs. For this reason, they are not allowed any money, only a special card used for payments inside the center. However, corrupt staff at the center opened the door for cash flow. Detainees simply asked their family to transfer money into the bank accounts of the staff, who would withdraw the cash and give it to the detainees, withholding 20 to 30 percent of

the total amount.

While drugs could be smuggled into the center with relative ease, re-usable needles were even more highly prized, and hard to come by. "Scores of people would use a single needle," said one detainee. "Just rinsing it with hot water after use was considered adequate disinfection. Even when the needle was bent, we fixed it over and over again. A syringe was thrown away only when it definitely could not be used any more."

Families angry

The center never informed the infected detainees' families about the HIV infection. Liu Dengming claimed the center was simply following rules, according to which they would only reveal details of diseases contracted by detainees upon their release.

The families were upset and decided to do something. They wrote hundreds of letters and sent them to the media and related government agencies, requesting that necessary treatments be provided to the infected and for the responsibility of the center to be addressed. However, they did not get much response.

They were also angry at the fact that for a long time, no HIV tests were included in the routine physical examination of the detainees. "If the virus had been discovered earlier, not so many people would have been infected," one family member said.

In addition, they blamed the center for not focusing on helping the detainees to quit drugs, but caring more about getting them to manufacture consumer products like photo frames and watches in order to make money.

Where do the profits go? Director Yu Hongqiu said the money was used for various expenses, such as paying for facilities. He also said that some of the civic technicians coming in to assist with work at the center became drug smugglers for the detainees.

Hong Yongkai at the Fujian prison administration acknowledged that the center should take responsibility for its poor management. He pledged to improve management and facilities, as well as cutting off the source of drugs.

(Names of the infected detainees and their families are pseudonyms. Source for the article: *Southern Metropolitan Daily*)

Who's Protecting the Trees?

By Sun Daping / Zhou Ying

Danshan (Red Mountain) Beauty Spot, located in Xuyong county, near Luzhou city, Sichuan Province, was named a province-level natural protection area in 1994 by the government of Sichuan Province. The mountain got its name from its rare red earth.

However, *Beijing Youth Daily* received a letter at the end of January from Global Village of Beijing, an environment protection group, exposing terrible deforestation that has taken place around the mountain. Large numbers of trees have been cut down and now lie in stumps and branches around the ground.

"All the local people felt angry about the deforestation, but we failed to solve the problem. We hope that you can help us out," said the letter.

Investigation

According to a report in *Beijing Youth Daily* on Monday, workers from the road construction department found that many mature trees from the core part of the protection area had been sawed down when they were building a road near the spot on November 5. They immediately reported it to the local government.

However, the ensuing investigation, conducted by the local department in charge of construction, environmental protection and tourism, strangely found that the deforestation was perfectly legal.

According to the investigation, construction projects in the core part of the forest area complied with the permission granted by the local government. "The local Xuyong County Forestry Department is allowed to deforest as much as 509 square meters of trees, and only 180 square meters of that had been used up by January," said the investigation.

The investigation team did uncover some problems: for instance, some trees that should have been fully protected had been cut down. Zhou Honghua, a member of the Standing Committee of Xuyong County, said at a news conference on January 18 that the incident revealed the wide gap between the tourism and forestry departments. He also said investigations were continuing into whether some officials from the forestry department had been involved illegally in the construction business.

However, this explanation was not accepted by Hai Neisheng, a representative of the People's Congress of Sichuan province. He raised questions to *Beijing Youth Daily* whether the permission that the forestry department had got from the local government was legal. He also wanted to know whether the forestry department had consulted with the local beauty spot administration department before carrying out the deforestation plan. "If the whole process is illegal, then the plan itself is against the law too," he said.

Other reasons provided

Xu Jianxin, director of Xuyong County Forestry Department, offered *Beijing Youth Daily* another reason for the mass destruction of trees on Danshan. He said there had been a big storm on August 5 last year, seriously damaging many of the trees in the protection area. "A large number of trees were broken up by the storm, and some even were uprooted. So we

had to clear the broken trees away for fear that it might cause a fire in the wood," Xu explained.

As to whether the forestry department had informed the beauty spot administration department of the deforestation plan, Xu replied: "Actually there is no such department in Xuyong county at the moment. I hope that the government can make the system clear as soon as possible."

He Sizhou, director of the local construction department, told *Beijing Youth Daily* that financial problems had hampered the establishment of the beauty spot administration department. "We still are not quite sure about which department should be in charge of the deforestation issue," he added.

According to He, it is quite a common phenomenon in China now that the rights of property, administration and management of beauty spots are unclear. "According to the law, forestry resources belong to the country, and the forestry of beauty spots should be under the management of the forestry department. But in fact it is the construction and tourism departments that administrate the beauty spots," he said.

Meanwhile, one local resident who didn't want to be named told *Beijing Youth Daily* that he did not accept Xu Jianxin's explanation about the storm. "I also went to the scene, and I found that the diameter of some of the trees that had supposedly been blown down was as much as 0.57 meters. Such trees must have been as old as 30 years. How could the wind break down such large trees? And how do they explain how some second-level protection plants were also cut down?" he asked angrily.

Hai Neisheng was also sceptical about the version of events presented by the local forestry department. "I want to hear from experts whether 320 square meters of trees could have been destroyed owing to the storm," he said.

What is the real reason?

Hai Neisheng told *Beijing Youth Daily* that he suspected that the real purpose of the local forestry department was to make profit by destroying the forest. "I have found that they planted bamboos on the ground where the old trees were cut down," Hai added.

According to *Western China City Daily*, a local newspaper in Sichuan province, Pan Guoyun, the director of the Luzhou Forestry Department, once admitted that some local governments could not make a profit since the Natural Forestry Protection Project was launched in 1998, because they could not make back the money used to invest in planting trees if the mature trees were not allowed to be cut down.

"Compared with older trees, bamboo is a kind of tree that has to be cut down annually or it will die, so many forestry centers choose to plant bamboos to make a profit," Pan explained.

Hai Neisheng also suggested the local forestry department may have colluded with a private company. "I raised this question at a news conference, but we still don't know," he said. "The forestry department has too many rights that nobody is entitled to supervise. It is becoming a characteristic now to destroy a forest under the camouflage of law."



Photo by Xu Tong

The scene now at the former beauty spot

Inside the Secret Garden



Photos provided by Zi Yan

By Hester Xu and Arron Chang

One of the old areas of Beijing that has become cherished by foreigners is the inconspicuous Dongmianhua hutong near Jiadaokou, a narrow alley with enough room for only two people to pass side by side. One doorway is of particular interest, painted in red and decorated with porcelain pieces under an old metal plaque. This is the Candy Floss Café. Zi Yan, the woman who started the café, attended to every detail of its design and it has become an oasis of peace and calm in the city. Her name means “purple and beautiful” in Chinese and she is as petite, bright eyed and elegant as her name suggests. However, Zi Yan no longer runs the café. Though she has precious memories of it, Zi Yan is now set on a new course.

Porcelain baking in Chenlu

Zi Yan studied music composition at Shandong College of Arts, but her real interest was in painting and design. Coming to Beijing after graduation, she was happy just to be away from her father who would always force her to study music. She soon developed a stronger interest in garden and interior design, treating music more as a hobby, maybe something to do when she gets old.

In April 2000, Zi Yan went with two other girls who were interested in porcelain baking to Chenlu in Shaanxi Province, a small town where

official kilns were built and used in the Tang Dynasty some 2000 years ago. It was a fairly isolated place, but the students were eager to learn about the craft. They first went to Xi'an by train, then took a bus to Tongchuan. There they rented a tricycle which took them to Chenlu. It was arranged for Zi Yan to live in the home of a local doctor, partly because it was known as the cleanest house in the village.

Zi Yan soon found the only restaurant in the village and went there for most of her meals even though she was not used to spicy food, which is a major component of the local diet. The owner of the restaurant charged only two yuan for each meal and was amazed when Zi Yan willingly paid him five yuan.

The climate of Chenlu is extremely dry. Every three or four days, the locals would rent a horse drawn cart and send some people about ten miles away from the village to get some water. They had to leave very early in the morning in order to get back by late in the afternoon. Zi Yan said that the locals could only wash their face once every few days.

As a guest in the doctor's home, Zi Yan had the privilege of being able to wash her face every night. The water basin was then passed to the children, then the adult members of the family. After the adults had finished using the water, it was first used to wash the mop and then to water the vegetable field. In the space of one month, Zi Yan only had a bath three times, a number already considered extravagant by the locals who would have the same number of baths in a whole year.

But the most important experience Zi Yan had in Chenlu was baking porcelain. She learned to mould clay from an old craftsman and made all kinds of toys and porcelain ware that she liked. “I liked to play with mud as a child, but in Chenlu it suddenly dawned on me that porcelain making is not simply about producing a



pot, but the expression of the most instinctive and original wisdom of human beings,” she says.

It was already spring when she went there, but the loess plateau was still cold and dry. Along with the harsh natural elements, Zi Yan says she could also feel the direct result of human damage to the local environment. “I longed to create a small green world in the city so I could live in harmony with nature,” she says.

Candy Floss

By the end of 2002, after doing interior design for a client to renovate a Chinese courtyard, Zi Yan began to fall in love with traditional Chinese courtyards and the hutong and the culture they represented. She still feels excited about her gradual decision to find a place and open her

own café. “Although I had lived in Beijing for four years, this was the first time that I was so deeply struck by the life and cultural side of Beijing and really began to appreciate the city. I was suddenly seized by an impulse to own a place in the hutong and to realize my dream.”

Zi Yan began to look for her dream courtyard. In 2003, just as SARS was beginning to strike Beijing, a friend decided to go abroad and recommended a courtyard he had been renting to Zi Yan. She first saw it in May that year. Although the place was derelict, the 300-year-old pagoda tree growing in the garden immediately convinced her that part of her life already belonged to this place. She decided to lease the courtyard from its owner and began building her dream world.

The yard was piled with rotten wood, earth and garbage. Everything had to be done from the beginning. Zi Yan did the design and renovation by herself. In order to find some shells to decorate the garden, she bought a ticket for a train going to Beidaihe at 4 am one morning, and she spent the whole day on the beach collecting shells. She returned to Beijing at midnight the same day. By the end of the following morning, the shells had been placed in beautiful patterns on the walls, along the paths and around the pond. During the renovation, Zi Yan would come up with new ideas at any moment, so the decoration workers did not dare start anything without her being around.

Zi Yan had decided to recreate the pond after hearing that the original lotus pond in the courtyard had been filled with earth in 1949. Since the name of the alley is called Dongmianhua (cotton from the east), she named the café “Candy Floss”, which is a homonym for cotton pond in Chinese. Having designed everything to the last degree, Zi Yan had finally created her own fairyland in a traditional Chinese courtyard.

Paradise lost

Inside the scarlet colored doorway are narrow, pebbled trails leading through thick bushes of trees and flowers and leading to the green and lush hyacinths floating in a pond, with fancy carp appearing and disappearing from beneath. There are weeping willows by the bank and purple lotus flowers in the pots, and numerous small details like toy hedgehogs in the grass.

Around the garden are red walls on three sides and the dark blue frames of French windows on the other side. The building enclosing the garden retains its old appearance down to the old wood beams. The doors, windows and the garden are a mix of Chinese and Western styles. The porcelain pieces on the doorway were baked in Chenlu by Zi Yan. She painted the doors and walls in the subdued traditional Chinese colors of red and green, avoiding a discordant contrast of colors. Even the design of the toilet incorporates the Chinese saying of “man for red and woman for green.”

Recollecting some happy moments in Candy Floss, Zi Yan said: “older people with their pets and grandchildren from the neighbourhood were frequent visitors there. The grandparents, carrying small dogs or cats came with their grandchildren to play in the garden—as if it were a public park.” She said she loved cats so much that she once kept two in the garden, but they disappeared and she was so sad that she didn't get any more.

On the bar counter are arranged toy cats in all different shapes and sizes, creating the effect of a cat museum. Despite the feline presence, the garden also attracts birds and Zi Yan would scatter some crumbs on the ground for them.

Things started to go wrong when Zi Yan's relationship with her boyfriend soured. He had helped her build the café, but they found they could no longer run it together. Zi Yan decided to leave her beloved café early this year.

She had hoped to stay, seeing as she had worked so hard to build everything there, and she admits a sense of regret: “I'll never forget that experience. But now the place does not belong to me any more. It seems to be the arrangement of fate.”

It might be a broken dream for Zi Yan, but she now has a new aim for life. Candy Floss is only a small chapter of her life. She has never stopped doing the design jobs that she loves so much and she still has ambitions to become an outstanding designer. Now she is busy preparing to open another bar which might be an Aegean Sea style restaurant combining a café, bar, an accessory shop and a restaurant under the same roof, a place just as colorful as Zi Yan herself.



Zi Yan plays the flute in her Candy Floss Café.

Retrospective of French Movies: A History of Film



Cléo de à 7

By Ma Zhe

French film *La Grande Vadrouille*, known here as *Escape From the Tiger's Mouth* has long been a popular favorite in China. The 1966 movie is still regularly screened on Chinese television. A special film festival organized by the China Film Archive and French Film Archive will give Beijingers a chance to see some more of the best that French cinema has to offer.

Countless memorable movies have been made in France since the Lumière brothers screened their first film on 28 December 1895. As part of the Year of France in China, 2004, and also to celebrate the 110th and 100th anniversaries respectively of French and Chinese film, a French film retrospective starts today at the China Film Archive at Xiaoxitian, titled A Retrospective of French Movies: From the Classic to Modern. Forty-one masterpieces of French film made between 1895 and 2003 by 25 directors have been specially selected. They represent the top achievements of French film, and



Montage Lumière

also give local audiences a chance to experience French culture close up.

The 41 films are presented in five categories; Eternal Classics, Mother of the New Wave, Achievements of the New Wave, Wild Youth and Comedy and Others.

Eternal Classics

Although the history of cinema is short compared with that of painting, music and architecture, many outstanding works have been created, some of which have become classics. These influential films have



Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse

been attracting new audiences for generations. All of the 10 films in this section were made before 1953, and their magic has never faded. The section is in two parts: silent films and sound films.

The silent films take us back to the first days of the film industry and the birthplace of movies. December 28, 1895 is widely acknowledged as the birth date of the film industry. On that day the Lumière brothers screened their first works, some 10 short films such as *Workers Coming Out of the Factory* and *Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat*. Despite the prediction of Louis Lumière that "The cinema is an invention without a future," the new medium rapidly became immensely popular. By the end of 1897, the brothers had sent film crews to every continent except Antarctica, completing more than 750 films. The first movies filmed in China are among these works. In the 1960s, founder of the French Film Archive Henry Langlois repaired his collection of Lumière movies and turned them into a special edition Montage Lumière. Thanks to his efforts, people today can witness for themselves the very first days of film.

Mother of the New Wave

This section was set up to pay special respects to Agnès Varda, a legendary director known as the Mother of the New Wave. In the 1950s, Varda's films, film philosophy and her sensitive skills inspired some filmmakers to make their own films in different, new ways. Thousands of unknown artists were encouraged by this movement in Europe, and they brought fresh vitality into the film industry. The movement became known as the New Wave as it swept across the world. Many New Wave directors



Le Dernier métro

have become real masters and many newcomers today are still affected by it. Agnès Varda will attend the opening ceremony of Retrospective of French Movies: From the Classic to Modern with a photo collection about Beijing in 1965, 2 chosen from among thousands of photos she took when she came to Beijing as an adviser for a documentary film titled *Sundays of Beijing* (1965). Meanwhile, Varda's nine movies, including *Sans toit ni loi* (1985) and *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000), will be screened. It is a chance to study the philosophy of her films and to explore what drove the New Wave movement.

Sans toit ni loi tells of the tragic death of a young female tramp, who rebelled against all social rules. Around 1984, a new term "nouveaux pauvres (new poor)" was widely used by the media to describe a new social phenomenon, raising social consciousness about the needs and problems of such disadvantaged people. In October of that year, Varda met a young tramp when she was doing an investigation into phoenix tree disease. That girl inspired Varda to make a movie to bring to public attention this social group, and the girl became the prototype for the film. *Sans toit ni loi* won the best film award at the Venice Film Festival in 1985.

Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse, inspired by Jean Francois Millet's famous painting *The Gleaners*, describes the image of gleaners in today's France. Some gleaners offer their thoughts on their way of life and their feelings about the waste of daily living. Varda commented that there were three kinds of gleaners: those who gleaned for a living, artists who were seeking materials and objects to use in their artworks, and those who gleaned because they loved it. This film has won more than 30 awards since its release.

Achievements of the New Wave

The French New Wave was the biggest, and most influential movement in the history of the film industry. From 1959 to 1962, more than 100 directors made their debut, many of whom achieved international recognition. The New Wave movement has left many priceless treasure to France and influenced the film industry worldwide. Their influence can also be seen in the achievements of the fifth generation of China's

filmmakers. This movement rewrote the rules of the traditional film industry and started the new age of the modern film industry.

This section features seven films from New Wave masters such as Jacques Demy, Jean-Luc Godard and Maurice Pialat.

Wild Youth

Rebelliousness of spirit is one of the motive forces in the development of human society. Rebelling against traditional rules has led to progress in art, science and culture. These seven films are presented to highlight the views of four directors on the spirit of rebellion. *Zéro de conduite* (1933), directed by Jean Vigo was banned in France until 1946, because middle-class audiences saw it as "an attack against France." *Zéro de conduite* was the pioneer of films



Mauvais sang

about the rebellious spirit of youth. Its influence can be seen not only in New Wave movie *Les quatre cents coups* (1959) by Francois Truffat and *If* (1969), directed by Lindsay Anderson, but also in American movies such as *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955), directed by Nicholas Hytner and *Dead Poets Society* (1989), directed by Peter Weir.

Comedy films and others

It would not be a French film exhibition if it did not include French comedy. Comedy films date back to the first days of film, in short works by the Lumière brothers, trying to get a laugh from audiences. Some French comedies, like *La Grande Vadrouille*, are extremely popular in China. Two of the eight comedy films were specially selected as examples of "literati comedy."

Jacques Tati was not only a remarkable comedy director but also known as the greatest French comedy actor since the end of the silent era. Three of Jacques Tati's six films will be screened at the exhibition. These movies satirize the life of middle class and modernization.

There are a further six films of a different style also included in this section. *Police Python 357* (1976), from director Alain Corneau, is a suspense story with an unexpected end. *Tchao Pant2in* (1983) and *Jean de Florette* (1986) are from director



Playtime

Claude Berri. *Jean de Florette* is based on Marcel Pagnol's famous novel *Leau des Collines*. The film was so successful in Europe that the French minister of culture declared the French film industry would be saved if they could make just six movies like *Jean de Florette* every year. *Borsalino and Co* (1974) directed by Jaacques Dera, is the sequel the 1970 film *Borsalino*, a gangster comedy-drama. *Paris 1900* (1946) is an important documentary movie in film history. Director Nicole Vedres used hundreds of documentary movies made from 1900 to 1914 to show the structure of upper-class society and life in Paris before the First World War. *Récréations* (1992) is the most famous of Claire Simon's documentary films, exploring break time in kindergartens.

Retrospective of French Movies: From the Classic to Modern is the biggest exhibition of French films this century. A similar exhibition was held by the China Film Archive in 1985, during which 40 French movies were shown in five Chinese cities. Between December 1984 to February 1985, an exhibition called Retrospective of Chinese films was run by the French Film Archive and Centre Pompidou in France, with 132 Chinese movies shown in Lyon, Grenoble, Nantes and Paris. These two exhibitions were significant for the cultural communication between these two countries.

A total of 110 Chinese movies were shown in France from November 2003 to March 2004. These films gave French audiences a taste of Chinese culture, the country's magnificent landscape and the daily life of Chinese people in different styles and from various points of view. Now, the Retrospective of French Movies offers Beijingers a chance to know more about French history, life and culture through 41 great French films.

For program details, see Page 15.

What's New

By Tom Spearman

CD
Manic Street Preachers:
Lifeblood

Usually when bands move in a more commercial direction it's followed by howls of derision from the critics. But this latest, more chart-friendly album from the veteran Welsh guitar band has been warmly received. Long known for their angst and an honesty that may sometimes have been offputting for mainstream audiences, the Manics have produced some of their strongest songwriting in years on *Lifeblood*. The lyrical contrariness is there as always, as with hit single *The Love of Richard Nixon*, an apparently sympathetic lament for the disgraced former US president. But the tune is strong and simple, even though the chorus has a slightly scary echo of *Enola Gay* by Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark. There are plenty of potential singles on this album. *To Repel Ghosts* has a dramatic riff, reminiscent of some of the Manics' best songs. Final track *Cardiff Afterlife* is strangely uplifting, even though it recalls the disappearance of the band's former guitarist Richey James.

DVD

Sideways



Even if this were merely the one-note, humorous road trip movie it appears to be at the outset, *Sideways* would still be essential viewing. It's got more superb one-line gags than most of the movies released in the last year. Teacher, aspiring writer and wine aficionado Miles hits the road with his actor friend Jack, hoping to show him a good time and some fine California wine in the seven days remaining before Jack gets married. Naturally, the sad, disappointed side of these two lovable losers gradually comes across, and the movie deals out some genuine pain and heartbreak along with the laughs. It's at its best in the scenes where wine is not cherished but is a symbol of false hope and comfort. *Sideways* is another hugely impressive film in the career of director Alexander Payne, following on from *Election* and *About Schmidt*.

Million Dollar Baby



One of the great things about the Academy Awards, better known as the Oscars, is the energising effect they have on the DVD market. Advance copies of films sent out to members of the academy for their judgement almost always make their way into the market, allowing people a reasonably good quality view of films before the DVD's official release. Director Clint Eastwood's latest baby triumphed at the Oscars, bumping Martin Scorsese's hotly tipped but somewhat disappointing *The Aviator* firmly off the rostrum, but did it deserve to? If you can't wait for the official DVD to come out, the version currently available in Beijing isn't bad. The picture quality leaves a little to be desired, but the sound is good, Clint's gravelly tones as boxing trainer Frankie Dunn coming across nicely.

By Jacqueline Yu

This is one of the world's top ballet troupes, led by one of the greatest ballet choreographers still alive, Maurice Bejart. They brought to Beijing four of their classic dances, which have enchanted audiences worldwide for more than three decades. So it was a surprise that the whole thing went relatively unnoticed.

Bejart Ballet Lausanne became world-renowned after its "Rite of Spring" was performed at the Monnaie Royal Theatre in 1959. The company has been trimmed down to 35 dancers over the years, Bejart choosing this core group from the most talented ballet dancers in France.

The company was well received when it first came to Beijing in 2001, but its second tour has received

surprisingly little publicity. As usual, apart from local dancers, students and dance critics in Beijing, few Beijingers showed much interest in modern dance; they would rather buy tickets to see *Swan Lake* performed by an unknown ballet troupe. So last Friday, shortly before the second performance in Bejart Ballet's Beijing itinerary, the side seats in Beizhan Theatre were empty.

The night opened with *Seven Greek Dances*, which echoes and gently parodies traditional Greek dance. To the tune of a sea wave, a big ensemble of 32 dancers wearing simple clothes - bare chested men in white or black trousers, and women in black leotards - performed in unison slow-motion walking motifs. The beautiful score by Mikis Theodorakis made this more pleasant to see than some

Bejart
Lukewarm
in Beijing

The Firebird



Seven Greeks Dances

modern dance pieces which often feature electronic music. The dance had a good variety, including a male solo, three pas de deux and several lively ensemble dances with some interesting group patterns.

The first half of the evening also included *Le Voyage*, with electronic music by Pierre Henry. The dance was first created in 1962 and was revived specially for this year's Hong Kong Arts Festival, held just a few days before the company came to Beijing. Bejart's inspiration is said to be the Tibetan theme of death and rebirth. As the son of philosopher Gaston Berger, who learned Chinese partly because of the great European interest in Chinese culture and art, Maurice Bejart had long dreamed

of visiting China. The beginning of the work sees a group of pregnant women before the emergence of a male soloist who presumably has been reborn. Thereafter, the piece became less classical and somewhat ungainly, more typical of modern dance than ballet.

The *Firebird* saw the original ballet fairy-tale replaced with an allegorical tale of rebellion and revolution, of catharsis and of rebirth. A male revolutionary leader heading a group of partisans symbolizes the phoenix rising from the ashes and the spirit of revolution. Bejart's concept is quite clear, especially when his boys were dressed in clothes that reminded most Chinese audience members of the New Fourth Army (Xinsijun). After the leader's

death, there appears a Phoenix which rises from its ashes and seems to continue the mission. Bejart's interpretation of Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird* score aims to translate the famous music in a different way, giving a new language of gestures, as well as an insight into the cultural origins of the Russian music.

Then came *Bolero*, a reliable crowd-pleaser. As Ravel's hypnotic rhythms churn out of the loudspeaker, the lone ballerina (or male dancer-the solo spot could be taken by a man or a woman) dances on top of the gigantic round table, daring the men ranged around on chairs to approach. 20 local dancers from Beijing were chosen from an audition to appear as extras in this set.

Zhang Chu Comes Back

By Wang Yao

Zhang Chu, born in 1968, is as famous for his lyrics as his music. He entered college at the age of 17, but soon dropped out, and in 1987 he came to Beijing alone to pursue a music career. He recorded the songs *Xi Chu Yang Guan* and *Bo Po Mo Fo* in 1988. Then he took part in the recording of China Fire 1, and released what is still his best-known song, *Jie Jie (Sister)*. In 1994 he released his album *Gudu De Ren Shi Kechide*. By now, Zhang was one of the most prominent figures in Chinese rock, along with Dou Wei (famous for the album *Hei Meng*) and He Yong (famous for the album *Zhong Gu Lou*). He released the album *Zao Fei Ji De Gong Chang (Airplane Factory)* in 1997 and in the same year appeared with Dou and He at the Hong Kong Coliseum. But after that, Zhang Chu retreated to Xi'an and little has been heard of him since. So expectations were high last Friday before a gig at Yu Gong Yi Shan Bar in Beijing to herald Zhang's come-back.

The party began at half past eight with two warm-up performances. Folk singer Wan Xiaoli performed some of his well known songs such as *Hu Li*, *Ma Ma* and *Liu Mang*. Wan's voice was poetic and his lyrics satirized some of the more vulgar aspects of society. Though the audience initially shouted their impatience for Zhang Chu to perform, they gradually got into Wan's simple and frank performance. The next performer was Zhang Tie,

a new singer. Zhang Tie and his band produced a strong and heavy sound and beats, and Zhang Tie's voice was suited to the pop songs, even though some people kept expressing their impatience to see Zhang Chu. Zhang Tie's guitar player was excellent, using a strong sound to complement Zhang Tie's soft voice.

Next up was the star of the night: Zhang Chu. The relatively small venue was crowded with nearly 700 people and the people shouted and screamed for Zhang to appear. Some of the older members of the audience said they were loyal fans of Zhang Chu and had been looking forward to seeing this icon of their younger days.

Zhang needed considerable protection to get past the crowds and photographers and make his way to the stage. People found it hard to control their excitement and rushed

and elbowed their way forward to see him.

Zhang was expected to perform his best-known songs and some new material. He closed his eyes and sang, apparently with a little bit of strain. His partners were the experienced band Chaoqi Houzi (Super Monkey), along with guitarists Xie Tianxiao from Leng Xue Dong Wu (Cold-blooded Animal), and Wang Yuqi from Second Hand Rose. The songs were the same and the fans loved it. Later on, Zhang asked the audience what they wanted to hear and they eagerly called out various old songs. Zhang seemed a little nervous as he began *He Da Huo Qu Cheng Liang*, and he soon forgot the lyrics. However, his frank smile allayed any disappointment among the audience, although some were unhappy that he sang only five songs in all before the gig came to an end.

After the party, some fans said that they enjoyed the sense of nostalgia. Others said that Zhang was really getting old and was not in such good shape. They also said that though Super Monkey were a powerful band, they lacked unison when they played the old songs. However, this listener enjoyed Zhang's mature voice and the passion he had for the music. In Zhang's own words before his show, "In the green days, I was so young that I wrote things that expressed my prejudice towards the world, which as a young man I wanted to conquer. Now I just want to show what life gives to me and what my life is now."



Zhang Chu

Photo by Demon.Q



Photo by Zhang Jieyin

Return of the Adventurer

By Pan Hao

Stories of legend and adventure lend themselves to opera, so it's appropriate that a tale based on the exotic life of Marco Polo should be adapted by the Paris Children's Choir (Choeur d'Enfants de L'Opera National de Paris). The kids brought drama and passion to their performance last Wednesday at Tianqiao Theatre.

"It was a year ago when we decided to perform this opera in China, and then we started composing," said Gael Darchen, general director of the opera company. "It took three months to finish the libretto, two months to compose the music, one month to find an orchestra, and the last four months we spent with all the children on rehearsals." The libretto, by Christian Eymery, is based on the story of Marco Polo's final trip home.

The story is set in the thirteenth Century. After 17 years of working for the Chinese emperor, Kublai Khan, Marco Polo feels home sick and yearns to return home. A chance arises when he is asked to escort the emperor's daughter by sea to become the bride of Arghum Khan, a Persian

prince. The trip is full of dangers, including storms, savages and diseases, as well as the discovery of treasure.

The performance of the children was vivid and lively. The voices and tonality of the young singers were excellent, tending a little towards the treble as could be expected from a maturing singer. The sound was light and soft. The music, written by Isabelle Aboulker, was exceptional for its sweetness and lively movement. As Darchen said, "The music is typically French, and the melody has a memorable quality, as well as being rich in emotion."

Though the director of the performance was Karin Catala, Darchen took the helm as conductor. The various acts were delightful and fun, and the acting of the children was spontaneous, fast and compelling. Even though the choir only arrived in Beijing two days prior to last Wednesday's performance, there was no sign of any lack of energy on the stage. "We had some technical problems with some parts of the set, but the children's performance was great," said Darchen proudly.

China to Hire More Foreign Experts

By Zhao Hongyi

China is seeking to employ more senior professionals from abroad and is revising relevant regulations and rules, aiming at providing better conditions and treatment for such experts.

The State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs, which oversees the recruitment of foreign professionals, announced the plan at its national meeting on February 28.

Agricultural scientists and experts in new seed breeding, planting, pest and disease prevention, are most in demand, according to the head of the administration, Wan Xueyuan, at the meeting.

In addition, senior experts are required in the areas of sustainable agriculture, eco-environment protection and construction, economic development, renovation of traditional resource-consuming cities, public health and sanitation.

To meet the new demand, the administration will increase the number of foreign experts on its list to 80,000 this year, according to Wan.

Finding Qualified Certificates

By Xie Lixue

It is said that the whole year's work depends on a good start in spring. Certificates, as the stepping-stone to finding a good job, have great importance in employees' eyes. With this in mind *Beijing Today* will introduce the various certifications in industries that are undergoing application or examination process in March, April and May.

TOEIC

TOEIC, stands for Test of English for International Communication. It is an English proficiency test for people working in an international business environment. It was organized by Educational Testing Service in the US, and introduced to China in 2002, and is now considered as the most prestigious certificate by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security for candidates preparing to work for international companies in China.

From March 28 to April 29, applicants can log onto the website: www.toeicest.com.cn to register for the nearest exam on May 29.

CGFNS

CGFNS (Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools) is the nursing test in the US, which was introduced to China in 2002. The first exam was held in 2003. As the only international qualification for the senior nursing staff, the CGFNS certificate is important for experienced nurses, but it is not so easy to obtain. Candidates must receive not only a valid CGFNS score, but also a TOEFL score (Test of English as a Foreign Language), above 540 for the paper-based one and 207 for the computer-based one, with TWE (Test of Written English) above 4.0, to eligible for the final CGFNS certificate.

This year's exam will begin in March and applications are now being accepted. Candidates can find more information on the official website: www.cgfns.org.

Majors That Offer Best Job Opportunities



Working and living in Beijing has always been a priority for the majority of new graduates.
Xinhua Photo

By Xie Lixue

Beijing Municipal Bureau of Human Resources announced last Thursday the start of a new round of seeking talented graduates from other cities or provinces who have been studying in Beijing.

Every year, some excellent bachelor's or master's graduates without a Beijing residency have the opportunity to stay and work in Beijing with the recommendation of their universities, an ideal way to get your career started in rapidly growing Beijing.

16 privileged majors

In 2005, 155,000 students will graduate in Beijing, among whom more than half are non-Beijingers. As a result, majors that offer the best job opportunities in Beijing seem more attractive for those Beijing residence permit hunters.

The bureau released a list of the most needed majors this year. They are computer science, mechanical engineering, architecture, automobile engineering, communication engineering, website and information security, electric power system and automation, road and bridge engineering, clinical medicine, nursing, human resources management, marketing and sales, and accounting. Also, in the education field, there is a big demand for teachers of Chinese, mathematics and English.

Approval materials

The approval period of

2005 is from April 1 to June 25. During this time, universities are encouraged to submit candidates' documents to the bureau every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The package consists of application form, recommendation letter and transcript for both bachelor and master graduates, besides photocopy of the certificate of College English Test Level 4 or Level 6 for bachelors.

Anyone who wants to work in government institutions is required to provide a photocopy of the certificate of the national public service test for graduate students in Beijing.

Path to Beijing

Ren Zhanzhong, director of Beijing Employment Guiding Center for University Graduates, expressed his understanding about the non-Beijing graduates' desire to obtain Beijing residency. But he also told *Beijing Star Daily* that with the opening of the job market, more employers take residency as the least important requirement, especially in some start-up companies and new industries.

For example, in Zhongguancun, a special regulation on non-Beijing graduates was released, under which students could receive Beijing residency as long as they were hired by a company there. Within five working days, the bureau will provide them with a reference letter, which they can use to register for a residence permit.

IT, Construction and Life Insurance Lead Career Market

By Xie Lixue

Entering March, no place is more heated than the job fairs. Among the industries, IT, construction and life insurance sectors have attracted the most attention from graduates.

IT

At the 2005 China and Japan IT Education Seminar on February 19 in Dalian, it was revealed that 425,000 new IT professionals would be required this year, with an average of 200,000 needed for the following years.

On several job-hunting websites, such as the ChinaHR.com and

zhaopin.com, the positions released by IT companies occupied first place. ChinaHR.com saw over 26,000 posts, or 36.3 percent for this sector.

With the combination of Lenovo and IBM's PC departments, many domestic companies are inclined to hire people with an international education or working background, while the big international companies prefer to cultivate the employees according to their corporate values.

Construction

Liu Zhesheng, chairman of the human resources associa-



The construction and property marketing sectors are demanding increasing numbers of qualified professionals.
Photo by sina.com

tion of the Beijing construction industry, introduced to *Beijing Youth Daily* that over 1,000 experienced project managers were being sought in the construction sector in Beijing. Although lack of experience seemed to disadvantage graduate students, the state-owned companies would provide more opportunities.

In addition, various job fairs will be held by headhunting companies and the agencies in the near future, so it is a good time to be seeking work.

Life Insurance

The domestic life insurance

market is gradually opening to foreign companies. In the last year, China Insurance Regulatory Commission approved 18 life insurance companies to open business in Beijing, and more than ten new ones also prepared to enter the market this year, thus a fierce competition for talented people will start in 2005.

Another reason for considering this area is the increasing salaries. In recent years, income increased between 6 and 29 percent for sales and management staff.

Pet Care a Growth Industry

By Xie Lixue

During the spring festival holidays, pets' beauty salons were inundated by pets and their loving owners. The tendency to treat pets as a family member is spreading in big cities in China, and daily care services for pets have the potential to become lucrative earners following endorsement by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security as one of nine "new careers" last December.

Li Xin, a pet stylist at Beijing Pet Hospital, told *Beijing Star Daily* that regular health care for pets was necessary, including combing, bathing, cleaning the ears, and trimming the nails and hair.

"It needs great care and patience for every step. Care needs to be taken when trimming a puppy's nails, for example. After the basic health requirements comes the individual styling, which depends on the character of the pets and

on the weather."

Generally, it takes one or two hours to give a full service to a small pet and four to five hours for a bigger one, according to Ling Fengjun, president of Beijing Pet Hospital.

China Small Animal Protect Association recently released statistics showing that there were 420,000 registered pets in Beijing, over 200 pet hospitals and clinics, but only 90,000 vets, and nursing staff working in China.

For newcomers, the starting monthly salary is around two thousand yuan. After working for two to three years, those with a bachelor's degree can earn between 3,000 and 8,000, while an experienced one might make 10,000.

Ling said, "With more focus to regulate the industry by issuing qualification certificates, the market for pet beauty and health has huge development potential."

Seeking Employment

A swimming coach from Moldova is looking for a job in Beijing. Qualifications as: Coach/Judge at National Standard; Olympian (Ranked 12th in the world in 1995), World Cup Silver Medallist; Experienced children's coach at all levels; Qualified driver (B, C, D, E categories), bodybuilding instructor; Proficient in Russian, English, Romanian, Ukrainian.

Contact Max Cazmirciuc at: 13126711168 or email: mcazmirciuc@yahoo.com

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Female Beijinger, 39, has a decade's experience in import-export business, human resources management, interpretation and secretarial work. I have a good command of computer skills and am good at English, both writing and speaking. Mobile: 13611163663

A retired president and CEO of two Canadian companies interested in teaching English or French in China. Cellphone: 1352 0549132, email: Jeanguyfurois@aol.com

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13781596019
Email: renliziyuan@fyrb.com.cn

Shanghai Whyte Asia Pioneer Pharmaceutical Ltd. is looking for instrumentation and automation engineers, chemical engineers, R&D managers, chemists, microbiologists, chemical analysts, process development chemists, chemical products sourcing executives, and web masters. Contact: Mr. Zhou at: 021-6120 3156

The Jiangsu-based YOSO Electronics invites agents nationwide for its products of CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, COMBOs, CD-R/RWs, and DVD-R/RWs. www.yoso.com.cn. Contact: Mr. Li at 0510-271 4856, 238 8339, 13812525708

The Southern Industrial Zone, Bincheng District, Binzhou, Shandong Province, is looking for two reps and five consultants in Beijing. Contact: Mr. Chen at 13561569235

A Beijing-based English newspaper is looking for reporters, freelancers and editors.

Chinese applicants should have university degrees in English or related majors and media experience.

Foreigners from the UK and US with relevant media experience preferred.

Please send your resumes and writing samples to: hr@ynet.com

By Zhang Nan

The UK and Australia have become top destinations for many Chinese students aiming to study abroad in recent years. The popularity of the two countries was reflected at the 10th International Education Exhibition Tour (CIEET) held last weekend at the China World Trade Center, where British and Australian schools and institutions made up more than 60 percent of the participants and drew heavy crowds of prospective students and interested parents.

Yet many people have been turning their attentions to other countries, like Ireland, the Netherlands and Italy, as alternatives to the most popular study abroad choices because their costs are lower and quality of education still very competitive. Booths representing such countries also attracted a lot of people at the CIEET, many of whom were particularly curious about some nations' enticing new education policies.



World Schools Line Up at Education Exhibition

Share, share alike

The CIEET, hosted annually by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE), was first held in spring 1999. CSCSE Director Fang Maotian said this year's exhibition was the biggest activity for exchange between domestic and foreign educational institutions in China.

Nearly 300 schools and educational institutions from 23 countries participated in the event along with more than 40 Chinese universities that operate joint programs with overseas schools and more than 80 qualified study abroad agencies.

"Exchange can help us learn about foreign education systems and know more about their development trends. The exhibition can also let foreign schools and institutions know about China's education and study abroad policies," Fang said.

Big student, school turnout

Some 18,000 people turned out last Saturday for the first day of the exhibition, nearly doubling last year's opening total of around 10,000.

Shao Wei, vice-director of the CSCSE, told *Beijing Youth Daily* last Saturday that the large scale of this year's event explained the huge number of visitors. Participating schools and institutions were organized by countries' official educational departments.

"More than one million students have taken the entrance examination for master degree courses in China this January. The employment situation in China is extremely competitive, so many students are choosing to go overseas to further their educations," Shao explained.

Schools from the UK, France, Holland, Ireland, Canada, the USA, Australia, New Zealand, Italy and other countries took part in the event. In order to attract more students, many countries publicized new education policies for Chinese students at the exhibition. Although the UK and Australia are still very popular with Chinese students, other countries offering lower costs, favorable policies and more are on the rise as education locations for Chinese.

Poland:

Most of the Chinese students studying in Poland are under government sponsorship. At the exhibition, representatives of the Polish embassy put the spotlight on some recommended schools to attract students ready to pay for their own educations.

The Nowy Sacz School of Business was strongly recommended. It offers two majors taught in English, management and computer science, and will accept Chinese



Eton College from Britain made its China debut at the event.



New Zealand is striving to draw more Chinese students with new financing and scholarship options.



Russian schools have a reputation for low costs and high quality.

Photos by Ayi

with high school education into undergraduate programs

Ireneusz Jagielski, second secretary of science and technology at the Polish embassy, said the biggest advantage of studying in Poland for Chinese students was the low cost. Generally speaking, tuition for a year runs only around 30,000 to 50,000 yuan and living and daily expenses in the country are also less expensive than in Beijing.

Italy:

The Italian University President League launched its "Marco Polo Plan" in the middle of February aiming to help Chinese students realize their dreams of studying and doing research in Italy. Universities and related institutions are asked to voluntarily support the scheme in order to support Chinese students with basic command of Italian to graduate from Italian universities and even find work at Italian companies.

The league is gearing up to open three representative offices in Beijing, Shanghai and Italy to bring the plan to fruition.

France:

The MS10 Plan, created by the French Embassy and put into practice by EduFrance, is meant to appeal to students graduating from undergraduate science programs at universities covered by the 211 Project.

Courses include one year of language study and two-year master degree programs that grant diplomas recognized by the French government. Available majors include mathematics, physics, chemistry, information, biology, environment and medicine.

Students can apply for the courses in March and April at www.cela-cn.org. Interviews will be held in April and students successfully recruited will go to France to study in October. Sign-up and tuition fees will total 5,200 euros to 6,500 euros.

Netherlands:

CSCSE-Neso Beijing and seven top-class business schools in Holland have jointly established the 2005-2006 CSCSE-NESOM-BA Scholarship Project. The project includes 16 complete and some partial scholarships geared to single students. It has around 2 mil-

lion yuan to offer to support Chinese students, who can go to www.nesobeijing.com for more detailed information.

Singapore:

Starting this September, private schools in Singapore that intend to bring in international students must meet the requirements of CaseTrust for Education, a plan created by the Consumer Association of Singapore (CASE).

Schools that have not met the requirements will not be able to help students to deal with visa affairs. Schools that are up to snuff must use standard contracts authorized by CASE and students must sign student contracts in order to protect themselves.

More information about the requirements is available at the CASE web site.

UK:

Education authorities in China and the UK have pooled their money to create a joint research scholarship program, the Excellent Young Scholar Scholarship. The scholarships can fully cover the education expenses of qualified students and scholars to enable them to do research in the best universities in China and the UK.

The project begins in September and will first cover outstanding Chinese students selected to go to British universities.

Candidates must be citizens of China or the UK, be engaged in natural science or social science research and have master degree or post-doctoral research experience. Candidates have to show the applied value of their research and have excellent English speaking, reading and writing abilities.

New Zealand:

Since January 10, CITIC Industrial Bank has been offering Chinese students loans to support studying in New Zealand. Many students heading to the country may also qualify for scholarships, as New Zealand universities are continuing scholarship plans for doctoral students and considering new scholarships for undergraduates.

Students intending to go to New Zealand can go to the website of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NSQA) for information on specific universities. The NSQA publishes detailed evaluation reports on every school in New Zealand in order to help foreign students avoid unqualified institutions.

Notice

Next Monday, Mr. Iain Watt, president of Australian National University, will participate in the "Splendid Australia" online chat and answer reader questions.

You are welcome to log onto <http://bjtoday.ynet.com>, or forward your questions to the host, Ayi, at: ayi@ynet.com.

Time: 2 pm, March 7

通知

下周一下午2点, 澳洲国立大学校长Iain Watt先生将做客“留学聊天室”的“缤纷澳洲”节目, 向您介绍澳洲国立大学, 并回答问题。欢迎大家届时光临。我们的网址是<http://bjtoday.ynet.com>。您可把问题发送到主持人阿义: ayi@ynet.com, 由他帮您提问。时间: 3月7日下午2点

Ask Ayi:

Q: I know that Premier Wen Jiabao visited an Irish university, the University of Limerick, in December last year. Could you please introduce the postgraduate courses at that university? I intend to go there to further my studies.

—Dr. H

A: The University of Limerick offers programs in education and research at masters and doctorate levels in its colleges of business, education, engineering, humanities, informatics and electronics and science. Application forms are available at <http://www.ul.ie/international/education/study.html>

As part of the university's overall research strategy, a number of areas have been prioritized for academic excellence and relevance to industry and society. They are information and communication technologies, biosciences and bio (medical) engineering, materials and surface science, work, productivity and quality, humanities and social sciences.

The university provides a range of programs that link into these general themes. For funding available to graduate students, please refer to the following website: <http://www.research.ul.ie>.

Q: I read your last issue about the University of New South Wales and have three questions. What is the annual cost of studying at the university? What types of programs are available? And what do I need to do to apply?

—Zhang, 13811199995

A: It's difficult to give an exact figure for total costs.

Undergraduate programs in arts cost AU\$16,320 to AU\$17,580, commerce AU\$18,720, engineering AU\$21,360 and science AU\$18,840-21,360 each year. Postgraduate programs are a bit more, normally AU\$20,000 to AU\$30,000 a year.

Renting a dormitory room on campus costs AU\$220 to AU\$360 per week, or AU\$11,440 to AU\$18,720 annually if you stay on campus year-round. The school also provides apartments at AU\$127 to AU\$144 per week, or AU\$6,604 to AU\$7,488 per year.

Student activities fees run around AU\$500 and you will need another AU\$500 for books and AU\$300 to AU\$400 for health insurance each year.

Living costs are more flexible, but you will need a minimum of AU\$100 per week.

Most undergraduate programs entail course work. The university provides foundation studies for students that need to build their base knowledge before entering college, as well as English preparatory programs.

Postgraduate programs are in course work and research work. Students that do not complete advanced programs can still receive a certificate for finishing one semester of study or a diploma for completing the first two semesters. The university also provides a short-term research program called the professional practicum research program.

UNSW runs exchange programs with dozens of universities around the world, but has not established any deals with schools in China.

To apply, visit the university's website, select your program, download the application form, fill in the forms and send them back to the school at the listed address, together with required documents such as academic records and English proficiency test scores.

You will receive a letter of acknowledgment of application from the university and if you are accepted, they will send you an offer. You need to reply to the offer and deposit AU\$4,000 in a designated account as part of tuition fee payments.

The school will send you a letter of enrollment, with which you can start to apply for a passport and visa.

The school will also send you an information pack. You need to arrive at the university 10 days or two weeks before the first semester starts for an orientation program meant to acquaint you with campus and the city of Sydney. (Edited By Zhang Nan and Ayi)



By Wang Yao

If Valentine's Day is a time for romantic gifts, then March 8, Women's Day, is better suited for something practical for the woman or women you love. Flowers wither, chocolate gets eaten – so why not pick a lasting product a woman can see and use every day? *Beijing Today* asked 10 young women what they wanted on Women's Day and got some impressive, sexy and reasonable answers.

Wu Lei, 22, advertising designers

"On women's day, I hope my man gives me

even more tickled if I opened the lid and found some **Buddha Bar CDs**, since I'm a music fan and have been looking for those for a long time. My boyfriend and I like to make things interesting, so I'm guessing he may pretend to be a guy delivering the washing machine and knock on my door to surprise me."

Cingar, 23, freelance artist

"My dream gift is a complete set of **Cafe Del Mar CDs**. It's the most comforting electronic music I've ever heard, something my boyfriend introduced me to. Before we met, I always listened to heavy



SINGULAR FOCUS

By Sabu Zhang

The Beijing Laite store in the sprawling Photographic Equipment Center in west Beijing is known as the first store to sell Lomo cameras in the capital. But instead of making a big deal of that, or trying to draw people with flashy signs and fanfare, the store simply goes about its business of dealing quality Russian cameras and optical equipment at competitive prices.

The best-known LC-A camera is available in three models that range in price from 950 yuan to 1,100 yuan.

Casual picture takers will get a kick out of some toy-like cameras on hand, such as the Babylon models in bright colored soft plastic that go for just 240 yuan.

Some other cameras emphasize function over form. The tiny Agat 18K half-frame 35mm camera (280 yuan) allows you to put two shots onto each frame of film. The amazing Hori-

zon 202 panoramic camera (1,850 yuan) takes 120-degree shots and produces 22 24mm by 58mm images on a 36-exposure roll. It is perfect for landscapes or more experimental shots. The Ukraine-made Fed 5 is based on the legendary Zeiss Tessar design, which delivers Lomo's famed contrast and sharpness. The shelves also hold Seagull, Kiev and Lubitel cameras priced from 260 yuan to 450 yuan as well as Russian-made telescopes, nightvision devices, watches, art crafts and optical accessories.

The store owner, Mr. Wang, said that he does most of his sales through his website, www.beijinglt.com. "Lomo lovers from all around the country order cameras online," Wang boasted.

Where: Room 1045, first floor, Photographic Equipment Center, No.40, Wukesong Lu, Haidian

Open: 9 am - 6 pm
Tel: 8814 0090

BOOK 'EM



By Sabu Zhang

Galleries and studios are not the only spaces mushrooming in the Dashanzi Art District – the factory-turned-commune has also become an interesting place to look for art books.

Two new book stores opened in the area recently, one of which is Labrairie Libre-exchange. Its specialty literally hangs on the wall in the form of portraits of legendary artists Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol and Marcel Duchamp. Its French name means book trade, while its Chinese moniker is more to the point – *shudian*, or simply "bookstore."

Books are the stars in the minimally decorated shop, scattered around on short tables and filling shelves, with plenty of light for browsing streaming in from big windows. The front table holds several issues, old and current, of *Art World*, known as China's top art magazine, as well as other domestic art mags famed and obscure.

The center of the room is devoted to works by Chinese art critics and translations of all kinds of books, including Chinese versions of Susan Sontag's *Where*

the Stress Falls (28 yuan) and *Illness as Metaphor* (15 yuan), an original version of Dan Brown's global bestseller *The Da Vinci Code* (240 yuan), Chinese-American writer Adeline Yen Mah's *Falling Leaves* (40 yuan) and loads of works on rock and art. The intriguing titles include *The Wild Blooming of Wounded Flowers* by local critic Hao Fang, Yan Jun's *Flaming Noises* and *Get in the Van - On the Road with Black Flag* (29.8 yuan) by American rocker Henry Rollins.

Apart from somewhat usual books of prints, the store also offers old books on art and political theory published by Sanlian Bookstore during the Cultural Revolution (24 yuan) and framed postcards of model plays from that area (40 yuan). In another part of the room, books make way for 798 factory t-shirts, postcards, DVDs, posters, low-profile periodicals and past issues of popular mags like *Rolling Stone* (20 yuan each).

Where: Dashanzi Art District, No.4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang

Open: 10 am - 6 pm
Tel: 6437 7998

Photos by Sabu

GIFTS FOR WOMEN'S DAY



some top-quality **underwear**. Good underwear can make a woman more beautiful, and top-quality items are good for my skin and figure.

My boyfriend and I have a stable and enjoyable emotional life, and since we're in the same field we talk the same language and can learn from each other. He takes good care of me – it's nice to be cared for and missed! If he gives me underwear on Women's Day, I will happily put it on after a comfortable bath."

Sophia, 23, advertising designer

"I want a cell phone with a camera function, like the **Sony-Ericsson S700**. My boyfriend and I could use it to record the sweet moments of our lives. He is very busy, always leaving on business trips, and we have limited time together. We could use that kind of phone to send pictures of each other when we're apart."

Wang Man, 24, corporate planning

"I want a **washing machine**. An old saying goes 'hands are the second face of a beautiful woman', so I want my hands to be beautiful for my boyfriend and that means no more washing clothes by hand. So, on that day, I hope he gives me a sleek, modern, mini washing machine. I'd be

or depressing songs, which brought me down. Once we got together, my boyfriend would play Cafe Del Mar when we were together and the tunes gradually changed me, just like he has.

Right now he is in Tibet looking for artistic inspiration and I miss him, especially when I put the soft electronic tunes on at night. I hope when he comes back, we'll have a long, silent hug, with Cafe Del Mar playing in the background, and then he'll put my hands on his backpack and guide me to a complete set of the disks."

Ren Jie, 22, college student

"An MP3, or even cooler, an **Apple iPod**! My boyfriend and I are both music fanatics – he already has an iPod and loves to joke that I'm out of touch because I don't have one.

I hope that on that day, as we're sitting around talking, an express delivery guy will knock at the door and he'll have my gift. It would be even better if he had already put on some songs that we both like. But, we love each other and I'll be happy with whatever he gives me."

Ouyang Yanrong, 24, planner and promoter

"I want a **husky**, my favorite breed of dog. A husky is more than a dog, it is a loyal and brave friend and member of the family. On that day, I hope my man will take me to a good breeder so we can pick out a dog of our own, take him home and care for him like our closest friend."

Lu Lu, 22, magazine model

Personal Classifieds

Accommodation

A 2-bedroom apartment to let at Dinghui Bridge, Haidian District; 3/6 floor, facing south, 64 square meters; fully furnished; working couples preferred; 1,650 yuan month; contact Bill Shao: bill51886736@126.com

Language Exchange

A Chinese girl, graduated from University of International Business and Economics one year ago, open-minded and standard accent, is looking for an English native speaker as a language partner. Her hobby is photography, swimming, skating, surfing Internet. Contact: bbnning@126.com

Fred, wants to improve his English level both in oral and written fields. He is working in a newspaper and is interesting in history, business and other interesting things. Contact: jhm816@sina.com, 6307 6490

Tom is willing to help you grasp Chinese in a short time. Contact: 8697 9782

Peggy, a Beijing lady (a second-level national athlete) with good education and excellent command of English seeks native English speaker who wants to learn swimming skills and practice Chinese (Mandarin). Contact: Peggy_zhang2008@hotmail.com, 13718447081

Professional Help

Part time female helper available, looking for office/household job. Good English command, MS office, business related experience, hobby in Chinese cooking, Yoga and gardening. Interpreter preferred, at least two hours. Contact: 13501221468

A certificated interpreter and teacher, who has rich experience in teaching and international finance, can teach Chinese and English as well as do interpretation and translation. Contact: 6475 6235, email: bear208cncn@yahoo.com.cn

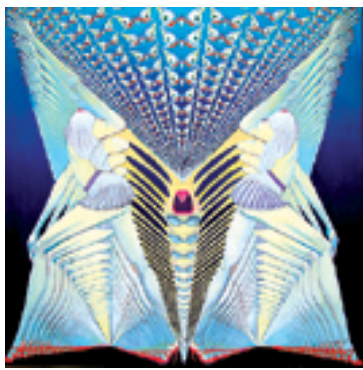
Personals

A 3-member family (both parents and a 4-year old boy) invites you to be living with us to enjoy bicultural experiences if you are from English speaking countries like Canada America and Briton. We are near BFSU, Peking and Renmin universities in Haidian district. Contact: jenny1mm@sina.com

On-web penpal wanted. Contact: bill51886736@126.com

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Exhibitions



Dancing Shadow – Zhang Haiying Oil Exhibition

Shandong native Zhang Haiying studied oil painting at the Shandong College of Arts and moved to Songzhuang in Beijing to paint professionally in 1998. His borderline psychedelic images of women dancing show hints of Peter Maxx, but these paintings are truly physically compelling – though they might inspire some nausea, they are worth the visit.

Where: Fa Fa Gallery, 1 Xiangjiang Beilu, Jingshun Lu, Chaoyang **When:** daily 10:30 am – 8 pm until March 15 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8430 2587

Pink
This show features two artists who started making feminist art in the early 80s. Li Hong exhibits her latest series of oils reminiscent of Georgia O'Keefe, and this opening coincides with the release of her latest novel. Also featuring an introspective series of photo-portraits by Feng Jiali,

the wife of one of China's pre-eminent scholars and translators of feminist literature.



Where: 3/4 Gallery, B-102, Landmark Crystal, 9 Jiuxianqiao Nanlu, Chaoyang **When:** March 5-31, daily 10 am – 7 pm (closed on Monday) **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6433 7401

Brilliant Forbidden City: Tian Li Woodcut Exhibition

Skillfully mixing different elements, Tian achieves his personal style with works that are brilliant, solemn, strong and gentle.

Where: Creation Art Gallery, north end of Ritan Lu, Chaoyang **When:** March 12-19, daily 10:30 am – 8 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8561 7570



The French Cultural Center, the French Embassy and the China Film Archives Art Theater present 41 classic French films. Experts from both the China and French film archives selected the program, which is designed as a snapshot of French cinema through the ages. Themes include classics, new wave, rebellious youth, comedy and drama.

Where: R1213, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitian, Haidian **When:** March 4-30 **Admission:** 30-60 yuan **Tel:** 6225 4422 ext. 1214

FRENCH FILM FESTIVAL



The films are divided into five sections, as follows:

Classiques éternels

March 18 6:00

Montage Lumière, La Tour,

Napoléon Bonaparte

March 19 6:00

Paris qui dort, Une Partie de

campagne, Le Carrosse d'or

March 20 6:00

La Chute de la maison Usher,

Marius

March 20 6:00

Le Corbeau, La Belle et la bête

La mère de la Nouvelle Vague

March 4, 6 pm

Cléo de 5 à 7, Sans toit ni loi

March 5, 6 pm

Jacquot de Nantes,

L'Opéra-Mouffe, Le Lion Volatil

March 6, 6 pm

Oncle Yanco, Ulysse, Les laneurs

et la glaneuse, Deux ans après

Fruits de la Nouvelle Vague

March 11, 6 pm

Le Dernier métro, Sous le soleil de

Satan

March 12, 6 pm

Un homme et une femme, Madame

Bovary

March 13, 6 pm

La Baie des anges, Pierrot le fou

March 13, 6 pm

Van Gogh

La Jeunesse sauvage

March 27, 6 pm

L'Atalante, Les Roseaux sauvages

March 28, 6 pm

Zéro de conduite, L'Esquive

March 29, 6 pm

Boy Meets Girl, Mauvais sang

March 30, 6 pm

Pola X

Comédies et divers

March 25, 6 pm

Mon Oncle, Borsalino and Co

March 26, 1 pm

Tchao Pantin, Jean de Florette

March 26, 6 pm

Playtime, Récréations

March 27, 1 pm

Paris 1900, Police Python 357

Activities

Asian War-gaming Club

Simulate modern and historical conflicts on a tabletop with miniature soldiers, terrain and period specific rules. Newcomers and veterans welcome. All periods and regions played but focusing on China related ancient and modern combat. **Tel:** 13801326404, 8770 8573, email: wo@caocao.net

Performances

Norah Jones Beijing Concert

American Grammy-Award-winning pop-jazz queen Norah Jones will appear in Beijing for a one-night performance, as part of her 2005 Asia Tour. Jones, born in 1979, began her musical career in 2002. Her first album *Come Away With Me* won eight Grammy awards. Since then, as a pop singer, songwriter, pianist and best-selling artist, she has proved unstoppable in her success.

Where: Workers' Gymnasium, Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** 7:30 pm, March 7 **Admission:** 280-1,800 yuan **Tel:** 6501 6655



trauma. While doctors battle to save her, her father hovers restlessly in the corridor – his mind racked by the memory of the fight for life of another woman he loved.

Where: Italian Embassy, 2 Dong'erjie, Sanlitun, Chaoyang **When:** 7:30 pm, March 10 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2187



His Excellency

The most hilarious Mexican comedian of the 20th century, "Cantinflas," stars as an embassy employee in the country of "Los Cocos," where he distributes visas in a world where all countries are designated as either "red" or "green," with both sides evenly matched. When the visa officer becomes an ambassador and Los Cocos is to be the deciding vote, both the red and green sides try to woo him. Directed by Miguel M Delgado.

Where: Mexican Embassy, 5 Sanlitun Dongjie **When:** 7:30 pm, March 9 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6532 2244

Movies

My Bittersweet Taiwan (Taiwan Wang Shi)

A-Wen is born in a farming family in Taiwan under Japanese occupation. After the war, intelligent A-Wen gets a chance to study in the mainland. However historical events cause him to be separated from his home and family for decades. Renowned director Zheng Dongtian depicts the mainland-Taiwan relationship with a bilateral, heartfelt approach. Starring Jiang Wenli and Bai Fan.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies Theater, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** 8 pm, tonight and Saturday **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13501251303



Don't Move

Directed by Sergio Castellito, starring Sergio Castellito, Penelope Cruz, Claudia Gerini and Angela Finocchiaro. A young woman crashes her scooter and is rushed to the hospital with severe head

Stage

Huangmei Opera: Nu Fuma

The Anqing Huangmei Opera Troupe presents the full-length Huangmei opera Nu Fuma, the story of a brave woman named Feng Suzhen who disguises herself as a man to rescue her husband.

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie, Dongcheng **When:** 7:30 pm, Sunday **Admission:** 80-680 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188 ext. 5126

Selected Opera Pieces

A concert to celebrate the March 8 International Women's Day will feature excerpts from Chinese modern operas which mainly depict Chinese women as heroines. The operas include Sister Jiang Jie, The White-haired Girl, Eulogy to Yimeng, The Prairie and others.

Where: Ethnic Cultural Palace Theater **When:** 7:30 pm, March 8 **Admission:** 80-480 yuan **Tel:** 6605 2404

Jams

Let's Hear It for the Girls

A celebration of all things female in Beijing's cultural scene... tonight's party includes photographers, writers, poets, dancers and some serious female lead singers. All are coming together in honor of International Woman's Day, not only to revel in their creations, but to show a broader audience that a show comprised entirely of women artist simply rocks!

Where: Yugong Yishan Bar, 1 Gongti Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** 9 pm, March 8 **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 6415 0687

TV and Radio Highlights

HBO

4 Friday

The Two Towers 9 pm

5 Saturday

Identity 9 pm

6 Sunday

The Phantom 8 pm

7 Monday

Twister 7:10 pm

8 Tuesday

Kangaroo Jack 8:30 pm

9 Wednesday

Sabrina 9 pm

10 Thursday

The Return of the King 9 pm

CCTV-9

Monday – Friday

Around China 6:30 am

Culture Express 8:30 am

Nature and Science /

Chinese Civilization 11:30 am

Culture Express 2:30 pm

Nature and Science /

Chinese Civilization 5:30 pm

Dialogue 7:30 pm

News Updates /

Asia Today 8 pm

Sports Scene 11:15 pm

Saturday

Travelogue 9:30 am

Center Stage 11:30 am

Sunday

Sports Weekend 10 am

Documentary 10:30 am

This Week 12:30 am

China Radio International 91.5 FM

Monday – Friday

Easy FM Afternoon 2-7 pm

Fun in Beijing 5-5:30 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

Saturday

Music Memories 8:05-11 am

Euro Hit 40 12:05-1 pm

Musique Sans Frontières 6:05-8 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

Sunday

Music Memories 8:05-11 am

Jazz Beat 6:05-8 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

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call 6590 2518

By Zhang Jianzhong

Skiing in France – A Club Med Holiday*By Hester Xu and Arron Chang*

For most people, their general impressions of Club Med are framed in those sunlit and passionate beach resorts in Southeast Asia. But an extended trip to France may well change your idea. In the Alps, the villagers' warm reception of their paying guests could melt the coldest snows in the mountains.

Although close to each other, Chamonix, Val D'lserre and Tignes, the three most popular resorts in the French Alps have totally different styles.

Chamonix: Unmatched beauty

Nestled under Mont Blanc and 1,035 meters above sea level, the beautiful Chamonix is surrounded by snow-covered mountains on all sides. From within the town, a cable car takes you straight to a 3,600-meter vantage point that offers sweeping views of the Mont Blanc above and mountain ranges beyond.

As Val D'lserre and Tignes are conveniently connected by escalators, snow trails and shuttle buses, you may purchase a combined pass for ski trails in both resorts. But if you choose to buy a separate ticket, bear in mind that you'll have to pay more for the ski trails in Tignes for its high location and being more suitable for skiing. Just like in Chamonix, you can start skiing right outside Club Med in Val D'lserre and Tignes.

The 300-year-old town of Val D'lserre holds a special charm for visitors. The town and its surrounding area was once a hunting park before it was built into an internationally renowned ski resort. Hunters' houses can still be spotted everywhere, adding a traditional flavor to the town.

But for serious skiers, there's no better place to go than Tignes. It is not surprising to see the whole town and village abandoned on any day suitable for skiing. Tignes boasts larger ski fields, with 300 kilometers of ski trails and 97 lifts, as compared to 100 kilometers of ski trails and 46 lifts in Chamonix.



Photo provided by Wonderzone

SPRING SKI

Although the weather seems to be getting warmer by the day, those who have been bitten by the ski bug are refusing to put their skis away, and those ski slopes that still boast snow are just as crowded as ever.



Mont Blanc



Val D'lserre

Owing to its unique location and culture, the town attracts crowds of mountain climbers, explorers and ski lovers each year. As Europe's most famous ski resort, Chamonix boasts 100 kilometers of ski trails for seasoned ski lovers and first-time fans alike.

Only five minutes walk from the town center, Club Med was originally built as a luxury house in 1910. The entire complex was renovated last year and 64 new rooms were added. Its interior design is a masterpiece of the well-known European designer Jacques Garcia. Boldly mixing neo-Baroque and contrasting warm colors, he infused a fresh life and new taste into the originally mountain style club, successfully creating a high-class, friendly and multicultural resorting experience to the club.

One of the attractions of vacationing at Club Med is that it takes care of everything. Paid accommodation, three buffet meals a day (with unlimited supply of red and white wine and other beverages), a variety of activities, children's club for children above four, entertainment shows and disco are provided without additional charge.

A choice of four packages available in Chamonix makes the trip a real bargain. Real skiers may be delighted by the Skier's Package, which includes a six-day ski pass and courses that let you enjoy a perfect ski experience. If you wish, start your ski run just outside the village, where the lifts carry skiers up into the mountains.

The Explorer's Package might be more suitable for a naturalist, with a six-day ski pass and a guided mountain trek on foot or wearing show shoes. It's also a perfect chance to get a closer view of Mont Blanc.

If you believe the mountain air is as good for enhancing your physical health as improving your visage, try out the Spa Package, consisting of several beauty-care and massage courses, a new service provided by Club Med with the cooperation of Cinq Mondes Spa.

For those lazy enough to forgo all the pleasures afforded by the resort, there's the Relax Package which allows you idle away your time in the village, take a sauna or a genuine Turkish bath or perhaps do some simple exercises in the gym.

Val D'lserre and Tignes

Although not so well known as Chamonix, Val D'lserre and Tignes are two favorite spots among many ski lovers around the world. At 2,100 meters above sea level, Tignes is one of the highest ski resorts in France. Val D'lserre is 1,850 meters above sea level.

G.O.: Any time and anywhere

G.O.s stands for Gentils Organiseateurs. In Club Med you may find G.O.s from any country or any region in the world. No matter where you come from, there's always a good chance you will find one who can speak your language and is willing to help. Besides their usual duty of receiving guests, they also work on the side as tour guides, enthusiastic dance performers and experienced sports coaches. In Club Med language, the tourists vacationing in the village are called G.M. (not General Manager but 'Gentils Membres').

G.O.s are good talkers and very cordial. Although most are young (average 20 years old or so), they are seasoned travelers and perfect people for a chat. Take the example of Silvere who works in Chamonix, he's only 26 years old but had already worked for many years in Nepal, Thailand and Caribbean Islands. These people are risk-takers who worry about nothing and live only for today.

How to get there:

The closest airport is Geneva. For Chamonix, either take a two-hour bus ride to Chamonix directly, or the super cool TGV to Chamonix station first, then finish the rest of the trip by a half hour bus ride to your destination.

For Val D'lserre and Tignes, first take a four-hour bus ride to Bourg St. Maurice station (or take the TGV, which is much faster), then it's a one-hour bus ride to Val D'lserre and a 25-minute ride to Tignes.

Tips

Chamonix is family friendly. Children above 12 can take part in skiing or other activities specially designed for them. There is even a junior's Club Med in Tignes, where G.O.s take care of the children whose parents are busy skiing or occupied by other activities. Various activities and courses are organized for children of different ages.

Club Med Resort Package includes seven days accommodation and three buffet meals a day, exclusive of air ticket and bus ticket. There is additional charge for using the bar, making out-of-village excursion, shopping in the boutiques, doing laundry and renting ski gear.

Ski season starts from December and ends in April, peak tourist season is February.

By Hu Jian

While most of China's ski resorts are reluctantly bidding farewell to a boom season, the hills at northern Hebei's "Ski Wonderzone" are still alive with the swish of skis and hum of chair lifts.

Spring skiing

The Ski Wonderzone was in the international spotlight recently, with the first Wanlong-Salomon Cup – International Ski Friendship Tournament held there on February 26.

The international event, sponsored by French ski manufacturer Salomon, attracted 70 expert skiers from Japan, South Korea and the US as well as from all over China.

After hosting the annual Chongli – China International Skiing Festival in 2003 and 2004, the Ski Wonderzone has become the official training base for the Japanese and Korean national ski teams and the China-Salomon Youth Ski Team.

Ski wonderland

The Ski Wonderzone is located in Honghualiang, Chongli County, Hebei Province, 249 kilometers from Beijing and 50 kilometers from Zhangjiakou. It occupies an area of more than 30 square kilometers. The highest point is 2,110 meters above sea level.

There are five slopes of varying difficulty catering to beginner, intermediate and expert skiers. The lengths of the slopes range from 1,800 meters to 2,500 meters with different gradients. The Golden Dragon Ski Trail is 1,800 meters with an average gradient of 200; the Silver Dragon Trail is 2,000 meters with an average gradient of 180; the Jade Dragon Trail is 2,500 meters with an average gradient of 140; the Little Dragon Trail is 800 meters with an average gradient of 100, and the Primary Trail, 350 meters with an average gradient of 70. The Ski Wonderzone also offers for hire 1,200 sets of the latest carving skis, 200 of which are top standard Salomon skis. It is also equipped with three sets of two-person chair lifts.

It also boasts a large-scale computer-controlled snow-making system. Natural snow time here lasts three months, the same as most ski resorts in northeast China. But the Ski Wonderzone can promise five months of skiing, from November to March, thanks to its snow-making system, even one month longer than the famous Yabuli Ski Resort.

Snow in spring

The Ski Wonderzone boasts the largest slope in North China and it is also the first ski resort with no entrance fee. It may not rival the more professional world class resorts, but its convenient proximity to Beijing and the fashion of spring skiing have won over the capital's die-hard ski buffs.

The sky is clear blue, and the snow glistens in the bright sunshine. There are snow runs made especially for beginners with gentle slopes, and also longer and steeper trails geared towards those veterans who can descend like a missile while making perfect, controlled turns.

Getting there:

The Ski Wonderzone is a three-hour drive from Beijing. Take the Badaling Expressway, then the Beijing-Zhangjiakou Highway to Zhangjiakou, then drive to Chongli, which is 10 kilometers from the Ski Wonderzone.

Buses to Chongli leave Madian Long Distance Bus Station at 7:30 am daily. From Chongli, take a cab for the 10-kilometer drive to the Ski Wonderzone. Alternatively, tour buses direct to the Ski Wonderzone depart from the South Gate of Beijing Workers' Gymnasium.

Tel: 6501 6655 ext. 4100

Tips

Basic ski coaching is free on the Primary Trail.

Skiing costs 120 yuan for two hours and 150 yuan for three hours Monday to Friday, and 140 yuan for two hours or 180 yuan for three hours on weekends and holidays. Half-day and one-day passes are also available. The fee includes lift ticket and ski hire.



Photo by Hu Jinxi